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SERMONS.

SERMONS

PRINCIPALLY ON

THE RESPONSIBILITIES

OF

THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE.

BY

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THEOLOGICAL

SERMON I.

SECOND MOTIVE IN THE MINISTRY.

BALAAM.

ST. MATT. vi. 33.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God."

THERE are two persons in Holy Scripture, one in either Testament, whose character and history speak with thrilling power to every minister of God; Balaam and Judas. They turn our eyes inwardly, and make us search and see whether our intentions are single and our hearts free.

Both of them were called to the highest position in their own dispensation; the Prophet and the Apostle. Both of them had not only the outward vocation, but appeared to the eyes of the world as possessed of an inward character which corresponded with their calling; both for a while thought well of themselves, and imagined "they would die the death of the righteous;" both gradually sank beneath one besetting sin, which slowly and surely preyed on the vitals of their spiritual life. In each case that sin was nearly imperceptible in its advance, unfelt by its victim, and in both that sin was covetousness. It was the admission of a second motive into the

pursuit of the spiritual vocation, and each after passing through stage after stage of self-deception came to a fearful and hopeless end; the solitary rock of the valley of Jehoshaphat, and the tented field of encamped Israel, saw the end of men who, devoted to the service of the living God, had only served themselves.

No cases can apply so thrillingly, so comprehensively, so inevitably, as these two. Thrillingly, because where is there one of us, holy brethren, who have not admitted some second motive into our ministerial life; and how know we but that it may be yet working slowly, and silently, and self-deceivingly, upon us! Comprehensively, because inasmuch as these two represent the highest imaginable spiritual vocations, the Prophet and the Priest: none can escape; they embrace all; if they fell, any of us may. Inevitably, because as with an eye ever turned on our heart, Holy Scripture goes through us with a power which from its close delineation of human character, pierces even to "the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow."

Among the many and difficult duties of the Ministry, singleness of purpose is one of the hardest, one of the rarest. The world in a hundred forms comes in and mars simplicity of mind, and the soul, once given to God, soon drifts away on to the wide and restless surface of the world; God "is not in all our thoughts."

The absence of single-mindedness, the substitution of avarice for it, the slow and unperceived advance

of this state of mind, its blinding self-deception, its contempt of good, its fair appearance, its certain though delayed and fearful end, are the features in Balaam's and Judas's case which make them highly important, well to be weighed by us all. Holy brethren, who of us are living to God! who of us are keeping the heart given a thousand times, at every prayer and Communion, to God; given specially to Him at four successive times, at Baptism, Confirmation, first Communion, and Ordination! Let us weigh these things, for the time is short, and "He cometh to purify the sons of Levi."

Of this particular and subtle form of sin, to which the Ministry is so liable, absence of single-mindedness, there are three or four parts to be considered. The sin itself, its slow and gradual possession of the soul; its self-deception, and its fearful end.

I. The peculiar and significant force of these cases to us, is the danger and tendency of second motives creeping into our holiest acts and callings; of all second motives in the Ministry none seem more frequent and more signally pointed out in Holy Scripture than covetousness; nor indeed do we feel surprised; a glance at the living world but convinces us by daily experience of the fact.

For thirty pieces of silver Judas sold the Lord of Life; for the world's great honours Balaam strove against and withstood God and a powerful conscience, and dared to cast a stumbling-block in the way of that people he had just pronounced

"blessed." The love "of the present world" had lured Demas from the path on which he had fairly and safely set out; he had made his choice, he had had his call, he had felt his vocation, and been united with the great Apostle in his ministry and his friendship: but the world was too much for him; he loved it, his heart lingered after it, and he fell; "he loved this present evil world."

In each age, and in either Testament, the most signal fall of the Ministry has been from covetousness and the influence of the world; and if we pass on to the early ages of the Church, and far beyond that to later days, we shall find the same mark, the same features, the same fall; holy men have fallen lured by wealth and the spirit of luxury. High orthodoxy has become diluted with the waters of heresy; imperial courts and the palaces of nobles have lowered the tone of the most elevated, and marred the spirit of the most apparently pure. The history of successful heresy, of deep and dark corruption of life and doctrine, of the too-well deserved scoff and sneer of the wicked, have been from age to age connected as a result with the worldliness and avarice of the Ministry; simply this shews, that however highly exalted and raised, we can be, and we have been reprobate.

The spirit of the world, the spirit of covetousness, and care for worldly distinction, the aim at high place, the giving up principle and sacrificing consistency on the shrine of advancement; the yielding to the solicitations of high rank and power-

ful intellect, "the reward of distinction at the hands of the elders," have shaken the constancy and withered the vigour of the strongest; and those who have stood firm for a while have too often yielded at last to the repeated bribe of the world, "the precious men, and more honourable." High place has ruined energy, and promotion has diluted orthodoxy; it has been too truly said, to our shame, when a man has gained the highest point he may become consistent, because there is nothing farther he can aspire to.

The words about Balaam and those like him are left as an awful and thrilling record of what God's ministers may be guilty of; and the slight mention here and there, portentous though brief, of others who from time to time fell from their high place, reminds us of what we are capable of, and what is our tendency.

These cases recorded so emphatically and so often in Holy Scripture seem to mark them as the rock on which the minister of God is too likely to split; and as I said, our own observation of life, and many a melancholy page in the history of the Church, would lead us to see how truly this is the form of false motive we have to dread. The land-marks of Holy Scripture are not to be passed by; they tell too truly the shoals and rocks we must avoid; but alas! this is but one form of second motive. The darkest and most latent infirmity is vanity, and love of admiration, ardent desire of praise; the seeking respectability under the guise of holy orders, and

the reducing the highest of all vocations to the level of being a step to domestic life or social dignity; the craving after intellectual renown, the desire to gratify poetic and æsthetic tendencies, are all forms of second motives which more or less will assail the Minister of God, and establish self as the object of worship and pursuit, not God. Single-mindedness is rare; we all have in us the seeds of some one or more of these evil tendencies; "blessed" indeed "are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!" Blessed; though how few, how rare!

There are instances recorded of most of these forms of second motives in the ministers of God through Holy Scripture. The impiety of Hophni and Phinehas, the disappointed vanity of Jonah, the tendency to acerbity in Elijah, the seeking of ease in the prophet of Bethel, and many more cases, all shew us the pitfalls and precipices which lie on either side of our path; while the intense severity recorded of the prophet of the desert, the deep self-abnegation required of Ezekiel, become signs and lights to guide our way.

I have stated a fact, the tendency of God's ministers to second motives, and shewn that fact borne out by Holy Scripture. The reasons seem clear.

The minister of God, however highly exalted, is still human; and being human, impure and sinful in all his tendencies: holy orders have not eradicated evil passions, nor the indwelling of the Spirit wholly cast out the residence of the evil one. The

grave demeanour, the high morality, the strict conversation expected of the clergyman, often is but a cloak which hides a gnawing passion, which preys all the more keenly on the heart, because it is restrained from outward expression. To these passions and desires peculiar facilities are offered by the life and employment of the ministry, while their actual strength is increasing from being forcibly kept in by the mere restraint of public opinion.

Tendencies to impure motives are fearfully accelerated and called out by the deep attachment, the warm sympathy, the repeated expressions of gratitude, the confidential and secret interviews, which of necessity spring from the fulfilment of the ministry. There is scarcely any human relationship, except one, which will bear intense intercourses with safety from impure sensation.

The opportunities afforded by our calling to these desires quickly and silently urge on the tendency, till it has become a more than mere desire, and at last we allow it to be the second motive of the spiritual existence, pursued for its own sake under the name of the fulfilment of the highest of all vocations.

In the same way, vanity and love of praise are manifestly fostered by the holy calling: the many opportunities of displaying powers, the unguarded words of flattery, the manifest success of work: all strengthen and confirm the tendency to vanity till we pursue it for its own sake, instead of, as we did at first, viewing it with alarm as a parallel motive of life.

Equally does our holy vocation become a temptation to justify taste and love of the beautiful. Inasmuch as the church is the temple which enshrines all that is highest and fairest of God's creation, its arrangements are beautiful, and its ceremonial æsthetic. The purest tastes, and the highest intellectual refinements, will find few opportunities of gratification so easily and so fully offered as within the Church's external system. The second motive of a refined taste, is one of the most perilous and striking tendencies of the ministry in this day.

Again, there are not a few facilities offered to domestic ease and respectability of life in the position of the clergy.

Respected by society, admitted into the circles of the refined, the polished, and the worldly; domestic ease and position in society soon descend from the quality of an accident to that of an essence, and become the leading motive in desiring or pursuing the ministry.

So I have shewn not only the fact of our tendency to second motives, but their cause. I might say more. But my object more immediately is now, with God's help, to shew the history of second motive in the heart, its beginning, its gradual development, and its power of self-deceit: and, holy brethren, how deeply important it is that we should have a keen eye on our intentions, even to "the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow;" for He is at hand "who will purify the sons of Levi."

II. Let us watch the growth of second motives in the case of Balaam as a type of our own.

His began in an evil tendency of disposition; evil is manifold, and every disposition has its own: his was literally covetous; ours may be impure, vain, proud, indolent, self-indulgent. You best know your own evil tendency. You know what you have ever felt your stumbling-block at Holy Communion, your alarm in critical illness, your terror when in self-conviction you suddenly "came to yourself," your first impression of dread and awe at any supposed approach of the last account. The leading temptation, that which is the germ of second motives throughout, that which is the cause why we do acts which look religious, and from which the religious life is counterfeited, that which without our knowing becomes the most active energy of our life; the "God we ignorantly worship," the idolatry of our heart, by which we really exclude graces, "the covetousness of Balaam"—is the besetting temptation of the soul; and before we can truly trace out the history in our own heart of the growth of second motives, we must discover that besetting sin: it is already, perhaps, awfully known to most of us, but for some, unless God help them in the discovering it, it must be a work of minute examination, and tracing back from the fruit to the original seed, a retrospect to the origin of what with too many of us has become a life of confirmed second motive, and absence of single-mindedness.

I will offer some tests of our besetting sins which will probably be the aim of second motive.

The sin which assails us on first waking; the sin which our thoughts wander on at prayer and Communion; the sin which we most severely blame and criticise in others, and see most quickly in them; the sin we most dread to hear that others have fallen into; the sin which we attach to unforgiven sins mentioned in Holy Scripture; the sin we have had most anxiety about at great points in our life, when we compare the present with the past; that sin whose temptation appears strong and rising, when we had hoped its energy had passed and its root nearly torn up from our heart; the sin which we feel at solemn times of reflection will very likely be our final ruin: these will very likely be our besetting faults.

With that sin, that besetting fault, that tendency, we all received Holy Orders. It was in us as vigorous as in any; Holy Orders did not quench its fire, nor did the reception of a new grace eradicate the inbred evil. We entered the holy state, we crossed the threshold just what we were, the same evil at work as in the men who daily throng the resorts of the world; and the moment we crossed that line every power of evil was at work to draw out those latent desires, and to make our holy life and occupation an opportunity of indulging them. But we set our eyes on God; we felt we were set apart and devoted to His service; a peculiar people, with a peculiar grace, full of hope, self-devotion,

solemn self-sacrifice; we almost forgot the existence of the evil, and half thought the newly-given grace had eradicated the old evil. That was our first step in our new vocation: one of good, of pure and first intention. My object now is to trace the history of one whose first intentions have faded into second, and who, beginning holily, has descended without knowing it into the state of second motive.

Seemingly unchanging as a vessel drifting softly from shore at twilight, is the falling from first motive into second, from belief to sin, from God to self; we do not feel it or know it; we halt and we are gone, and our "place knows us no more." Such was Balaam.

His besetting sin was covetousness; his vocation was holy, his desire was God's will, at least so he said, and so he thought. Satan noticed him, saw the germ of evil, the needle which pointed towards God in his soul, and he applied the magnet to attract it away, and yet under the seeming guise of religion. The bait was fair; the princes of Moab were the tempters, a king the party to be pleased, and gold and silver the reward. It attracted the evil desire, the besetting sin, and Balaam hesitated; he still felt God was his portion, he imagined his motive was single, his intention sincere; he asked of God, and God said, "Thou shalt not go," and Balaam at once obeyed, and went not. His first step from purity had been taken; he had not decided by conscience, but hoped

to find an excuse for doing what he felt was wrong. He thought he loved God, and Satan's object was to make him think so. He was beginning to recede from the high ground of first motive, and to overcome conscience, and so make his vocation an opportunity of indulging his sin. The delay had but increased the awfulness of his position, for it had hushed and satisfied conscience, and veiled himself from his own eye.

So it is with many of us; we have entered on our calling with an heart full of sincerity; Satan assails us, well knowing that if he will succeed, he must do it through the guise of our calling, or he will fail. Objects exciting impure motives, gratification of worldly pleasures and interests, offer themselves at once, and we hesitate. There is the mistake. We should not think. There are manifold opportunities offered on every hand to every sin: impure desire in close and confidential intercourse; love of the world in the place ceded us in society; vanity in the pre-eminence over others in some public capacity. Satan will apply his attack through the means of our holy calling. It is our duty to be frequently in our place in society, we err to leave it; we should employ our talents, we may not hide them in a napkin. So he tells us; his bait is through our vocation, his lure is in the shape of seeming duty; we are satisfied, we feel safe; it is well concealed: "I know that he whom Thou blessest is blessed, and he whom Thou cursest is cursed." The acknowledgment of the sacred promise is com-

plete, the disguise is perfect; it throws us off our guard. The fruit of disobedience is "the knowledge of good and evil."

Second motive in religion implies the preservation of outward religious character, the performance of religious acts, the profession and guise of religion in this life; while really the heart is turning all these things, unknown to ourselves, from God towards some other object of our desire, and we are acting from second motives without knowing it. Such was Balaam's case, such often is ours.

2. We now come to the next step of the history of second motive. Again the tempting bribe came before him, and again Balaam longed for it, indulged the desire, though God had clearly spoken, and told him its nature: he was no longer then as he was; he again went to God, and God said "Go:" and he was satisfied. He had asked God, he had preserved the show of religion, he was still fulfilling his outward vocation, he recognised God by his act, and he was about to do a thing within the province of his calling. His moral eye was fast blinding, a film was growing over it, and he imagined because he maintained his vocation, he was acting from high motives; he did not see the vessel was gliding away from shore, he did not see the gradual darkening of the sky by the shadows of evening, the slow and certain progress of sin in his heart. So at the same point of his moral being, "God manifest in the flesh" said to the apostate Apostle, "What thou doest, do quickly."

The first step was the resisting the voice of conscience, the first guide, and striving to find an excuse by which he might shun its teaching and seek another director; but this change was sought for out of the lawful channel, and it failed. The mere effort tended to injure, and the second step was that of again seeking the new guide, while the eyes were opened to its untruths, still sought for under the guise of religion. The effort at departure from the true path succeeded, and the conscience was satisfied.

3. But the moral process had many steps yet, the work was not complete. He set out on his journey satisfied and at rest; his ass was stayed in his progress by the angel of the Lord; he even fancied he was still following the right path, for he had compelled his conscience to mislead him. The angel was resisted because at first unseen; and the moment's time for reflection was lost. The heavenly being appeared in visible outline, and the tongue of an ass "reproached the madness of the prophet:" a double miracle for a moment made him pause and tremble, but did not serve to stay him: he fell on his face and acknowledged the heavenly vision; he was still under the firm persuasion he was doing right and obeying a heavenly calling, he was still deeply self-deceived. The angel had arrested him, but did not stop him forcibly, nay, he gave him advice for his onward journey. The clouds were gathering fast around the sinking sun of his earthly course, and the voice of warning be-

came fainter and fainter; and as he ceased to obey, gradually and imperceptibly took the form of encouragement and persuasion. The angel vanished and Balaam went on; still not without a protest from conscience: he said, "I will get me back," I will retrace these three steps; the step of reasoning with conscience, perverting conscience, and resisting trial and external reproof. He, however, proceeded to his fourth step.

4. He reached his destination; he met the king of Moab; he stood, the prophet of the Lord, on the edge of the hill; he was surrounded by the wicked and the heathen, and proud and conscious of the dignity and greatness of his position; with his self-respect, a love for truth and courage came into his mind, and under this he again entered his protest against sin. "And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak." Numb. xxii. 38. The position gave nerve to his words, and his words gave fresh force to his position, and the words and his position together deluded him into the idea that he was acting for God, from high motive, and with the pure desire to please Him. This is the next and natural step in the process of self-deception as to motives of action. He spoke boldly and clearly his determination to stand by God and right; the words confirm to his own mind the feeling that he was religious and high-minded. This step in the progress was not so much one

of advance in evil, for he stood at the apex of his criminal condition of mind, it was the culminating point, and the fifth step was one of entire and supreme blindness as to self and true religion.

5. But the progress of second motive is sure and gradual, and his next position was still more confirming and condemning. He still clung to the idea that he was religious, that he feared God, that he was acting from first motive; he said "I will go, peradventure the Lord will come to me, and whatever He sheweth me I will tell thee." He went and God met him; he now went out of his way to meet and consult God; he put himself to trouble for his imagined religion. A second and a third time he pursued the same process; consulted God, made a protest for truth; went through the show of consulting God, and deceived himself into the idea that all was right, and he had done his work, accomplished his end. Striving to gain his aim through the medium of religion, he expressed his firm and warm attachment to God and his people, and his earnest hope, that he "might die the death of the righteous, and his last end be like his."

Now my object in Balaam's case has been to shew the course of second motive in the hearts of God's ministers, and its singularly blinding effects. Let us apply this to the possible case of our daily life; let us suppose for a moment some tendency in one of us which leads us away from God, and yet to the gaining of which outward religion is a help and assistance. Among some of the sins most

incident to the ministers of God, are impurity, covetousness, vanity, and the like. I will take an instance of the latter. A man with a tendency to vanity receives holy orders; his nature leads him to love admiration, influence, and applause, to be pleased with flattery, and satisfied with apparent success.

I have given six stages through which Balaam passed; the reasoning with conscience, perverting conscience, resisting trial, and religious experience, the making religious protest, and apparent religious effort; through these stages he reached his end unconsciously, ignorantly, and self-deceived.

Through some such stages as these each man will pass in his pursuit of second motive.

A vain man argues thus:

I have entered on a ministry which places me in positions of prominence and importance; each act is marked and stands out in an isolated and defined position; I hold the reins of strong influence over individual minds and hearts; many acts I need not do, I yet have the power to do, which will promote, increase, and strengthen all this: I shall not be deserting my duty by not doing them, I shall be gratifying self by performing them; I have large and full opportunity, shall I follow the temptation or renounce it? The just voice of conscience cries, Do every thing to crush self; here the single-minded man will reject any thing which will cast a shadow on God, and will dash "self" to the earth. He who is beginning his career of second motive in the ministry, and reasons with his conscience, weighs

the acts, finds no actual and forbidden evil in them, and falls into the snare under some plausible reasoning; the arguments suggested are countless, possible benefits to others, the charge of separation from others, or the sins of self-righteousness; the affectation of asceticism; the hiding a talent: these and other motives are at once pleaded before the tribunal of conscience to persuade and settle us in the course of second motive; we weigh them, we examine them, we are satisfied with them, we do not see they are the first step on the road to ruin, the first departure from God and simplicity: we fancy we have good reason for following self in the place of God. The single-minded man would have made no question, no examination, no hesitation; he would have acted on the first impression, and been saved a hundred sorrows. The moment we begin to reason with conscience we immediately take the first step from simplicity and truth.

Having done this, the next step will be, as with Balaam, that of perverting conscience. Having begun to seek an excuse for gratifying self through the instrumentality of holy orders and an exalted position, we go on to substitute the view we have gained by our reasoning for that originally given by the authoritative voice within us, or, in other words, our conscience itself misleads us, and tells us right for wrong and bitter for sweet. We fly to conscience as our guide, and it tells us we may do the thing we desire, and so we feel that to be an imperative duty which at first required reasoning

to allow us to contemplate. We make the difficulties it should have been our whole aim to avoid, and the reasoned conscience becomes a perverted and false one. The pursuit of an object which we began to seek from love to God, we continue to pursue for the sake of a false and wrong influence, until we have so placed ourselves with regard to it that we can scarcely withdraw without damaging either it or ourselves.

The next step of the progress will be the shunning the force and effect of trials and visitations. God never leaves His servant till every means has been tried, and He will visit him and check him with trials to warn him of his course: he has reasoned with conscience till he has been led to neglect its voice, and "no other sign will be given." But severe trials come, illness protracted and irksome, severe domestic afflictions, loss of influence, personal failures, loss of property. The true cause of the trial is not seen at once; we are as Balaam hedged in and stopped by an unseen angel, but by degrees the angel comes out, and we see the hand of God in the affliction, and discover the cause for which He sent it. But there is one awful feature in the case of the pursuer of second motive; God cares for him and warns him, but while he does so He seems to withdraw grace, and the very hand which is stretched out to receive His mercy becomes paralysed and powerless to grasp the proffered mercy. The trial received and understood often has no effect, and we pursue

our journey; the vanity it was meant to prostrate by withdrawing us from scenes of display, the lust it was meant to cool by leading us away from its object, the worldliness it was meant to remove by withdrawing us from the world's influence and touch, all too often increase because we will not listen to the voice of warning.

Having passed through all these stages we have reached a point in his moral history; his pursuit of second motive is nearly complete; he is in full pursuit of his object, and he has resigned himself to it; his next point is to make sacrifice for good, as he thinks, while it is but a sacrifice for lust; he returns into the world to enquire of God; he goes out of the way to pursue his object. When a man has reached this sinful point under the guise of religion, self-deceived and deceiving others, he makes sacrifice to conscience, and takes for granted he is right; the truth is, self-sacrifice is no certain sign of truth of aim.

These are certain fearful effects of the pursuit of second motive. We are under a firm conviction all the time that we are working and acting from the first motive; we do not know we are guided by love of self, we think it is God before us; every act looks like a religious act, is dressed in the garb of duty. Every object we follow appears to our eyes decorated in a heavenly attire, every self-sacrifice seems for God, every earnest effort appears to us to be for the highest reason, whereas truly we are all the while seeking self, pursuing a favourite lust round every

corner, following up an accustomed habit of evil, gratifying our feelings of envy or malice against those we hate, and going on the high road to destruction, instead of the way which leads to eternal life; while the land which is before us is but mist, and what we think is the ray of heaven is only the glare of hell. Our holy vocation, our high and spiritual office, panders to our vilest sins and lusts, while we think we are well preparing for our last account. As we go on the impression increases, and though to the eyes of all around we are manifestly self-seeking, we alone do not see it, we alone are persuaded we are seeking God; the dress of holy things has been so thrown by our hands over the objects of our lust, that though they are corpses and skeletons, we think we see beauty through the form of holy things, and frequently are persuaded to do the very thing which a short time before we should have shuddered at.

Another feature of second motive is the power of doing marked religious acts with greater point than those who act from the first motive, and while we do it think it is from religious fervour or devotion to God; whereas the desire of self-gratification gives the act energy, and enables us to go through high self-denial of it without shrinking. We are capable of any amount of self-sacrifice to achieve the attainment of selfish desires, and sometimes we are astonished at the amount of energy which we think we are thus giving to God and religion.

Again, there is no limit to be placed to this power of self-deception; we may go on under the impression that we are acting for God, while in truth we are simply seeking religious vocations as an opportunity of serving self, until we commit ourselves to acts in direct defiance of God; which acts the whole world see through and condemn, and all the while we are saying, we are serving God. "Let me die the death of the righteous." Balaam advised Balak to cast a stumbling-block in the way of Israel; he induced him to offer the opportunity of a vile and dark impurity; he strove to separate God from His people in the most subtle of all ways; he tried to alienate the ancient heritage of Jehovah, from the living God, by deadly crime: he succeeded in the plot, and yet all the while made himself believe he was acting rightly, and in that condition of mind he died, being slain in battle;—awful, past description awful!

Another awful circumstance is this, that there is a line beyond which the having acted from second motives becomes hopeless, and our case impossible for repentance, when the heart has become hard and the conscience seared, and we call right wrong, and wrong right; when the moral sense is destroyed, a day when God has been too long trifled with, and religion been too long made to pander to our lust, a day when God ceases to be gracious, and we cease to feel: and when we cross that line, beyond which the sun of hope never shines, we know not; the line is as invisible as the step of a locust on the

wilderness of sand. We are thoughtless and full of a second object, are scheming and planning, even are happy and easy; we reach the line; we pass it; —the next moment we are as we were before, easy, confident, at rest, but that moment has lost all; heaven, hope, peace, pardon, life, all lost; and to the eye of angels we are a dark object in God's creation, without a ray of light or hope; and yet we know it not.

Another peculiarity and feature of the life of second motive, is, that while he who leads it is often ignorant of his doing so, others who watch him see clearly that his life is not for God. His second motive is transparent, and yet has not been seen through by himself.

Such are some of the consequences and features of this condition of mind. Public opinion, the fashion of the day, the custom of society, all may tend to give or confirm the idea that it is possessed by the good. The weight of numerical example is great, and when thousands are leading a certain life, and that a life coincident with the desires we are cherishing, we are glad to plead the example and precedent of the multitude whom we in heart condemn.

But all the while we are drifting away from shore, and unperceived our vessel is gliding out to sea, and the waters are so still and so motionless that we do not perceive its motion; we look presently, and find we have floated far from the rock to which we had anchored, and beneath whose shadow we had

moored our vessel. We move in the world with Holy Orders upon us; we have a certain self-respect and awe about self, which the greatness of our vocation invests us with: we dwell among men who pass us with a certain respect for our position, and who do a homage to our holy office; the recollection of a once ardent feeling of awe at our responsibility still clings to us, and with all that we are satisfied, forgetting, or not knowing, that we are decayed within, that the heart is eaten out, that we are walking in a show, "a vain shadow," that our external appearance is a mere mockery, that we are serving not God, but the idol of self, and that those very circumstances which the world honours, or we have respected in ourselves, have become changed in their relation, and that they have become indications of a more than usual self-seeking rather than an especial devotion to holiness.

To test and secure our simplicity of intention and purity of motive in some degree, let us try ourselves by some such rules as these. Let us ask ourselves,

1. The acts of my ministerial life, which I am most struck with in myself, and others most admire around me, energy, activity, self-denial, feeling, power to influence; should I, if persuaded it was my duty, be willing to yield them? should I not have followed that path if no holy hands had been laid on me, and no holy commission been placed on me? Is it my disposition so entirely, that any other life would be irksome, and whether

my lot had been to pursue my calling amid the paths of political or legal eminence, or any other kind of ambition, should I have been different to what I am now? Is it for Christ I am what I am?

2. If it were God's will to place me aside, to take me away from that very sphere I am pursuing, by illness, or suspension of bodily strength or mental energy, should I equally delight to feel I was in His hand, and fulfilling my calling, by bearing patiently the afflictions of privation as I now do, in pursuing a life of activity, peculiarity, influence, or creativeness? Should I, in the retirement of some unknown spot, or on the bed of prolonged sickness, or in seclusion for life, as much delight to feel I was glorifying Christ as I do in my present career? Is Christ indeed my aim? to be hid in Him my great and leading desire?

3. That point in myself of which I have most reason to be suspicious; that tendency which I have reason to think has most led me from first motives; does it increase? Do I throw myself with greater and increasing energy into it, and with that increasing energy, is there a manifest and visible decrease of spiritual emotion and aspiration?

4. There are times when by a manifest call of duty I am compelled to be with those I do not feel sympathy with, and have to perform works and acts which run in a channel distinct and separate from my usual routine of life and occupation; do I bear these deviations with greater willingness and pa-

tience? do I fret at their return? have I less and less relish for them? or do I accept them as blessed opportunities of crushing self, and realizing self-denial and self-sacrifice?

5. When thrown out of my usual course, is my temper irritated, and my natural flow of spirits low? Do I shew by my life and manner that I manifestly am upset by the deviation? If so, it is a sign that self not God, our work not our duty, is the leading and guiding motive of our life and ministry.

6. I will put a few tests in a briefer form. Do the praise and blame of man affect us so as to have the influence of much rousing or damping our energy? are we influenced by the feelings of that party for whom we are acting? do we act with the same energy and earnestness when quite alone as when in the sight of those persons whose opinions most influence us?

Let us use some of these tests to discover the purity of our intention; for, holy brethren, time is short, eternity presses on, and the awful result of an as yet unknown judgment is close at hand.

To that end take some such rules as these.

1. To preserve a single mind, use most frequent and searching self-examination. Let its questions be simple, few, and short; but chiefly on those points which you have long discovered to be your weak ones; a few days of neglect of this practice will make so tangled a web, that the years of coming time will never unravel.

2. Of course, use prayer largely and frequently;

earnest prayer for purity of intention. Make it a direct subject of petition and intercession; we scarcely enough value prayers for particular objects. The full earnestness of the heart given to one object in prayer must have its effect.

3. Seek, and be glad of opportunities of doing works which are not according to natural disposition; we should be glad of manifest duties which are not entirely coincident with our pleasure. Many such will occur during a short interval, if the mind be bent on their discovery, and even in the course of a day we shall find opportunities enough. Let us seek them, and when they arise not shun them, and we shall find that much more than we imagine, we shall be able to strengthen purity of intention.

4. Each day let us make it a work of special self-examination, to see how often we have yielded to second motive, and let us make it a matter of daily warfare and struggle, and let our conflict be bounded by the horizon of each day, lest the effort become too tedious, nay hopeless, by the length of the period over which we strive.

5. Let us frequently raise before our mind in picture and imagination, the highest motive of action; let us dwell upon it at stated times in the day, elevating before us as visibly and really as possible the holy objects for which we feel our work should be done.

In sum, let us aim at singleness of mind; without that our ministry will be void and vain, our work worse than useless, inflicting a curse not a

blessing on ourselves; without that we may indeed be the instrument of saving souls, but our own may be cast out of the everlasting kingdom; the gates may be opened to admit those we have taught to strive, and yet be closed on us for ever.

It is likely we shall be severely tried; none more so: earth and hell are leagued against us, and the powers of an unseen spiritual world are banded against us for our ruin. No weapon they can use will be untried, and no weapon is so keen, so subtle, so able, as that of second motive. Remember many of those signs which appear at first sight indications of pardon for sins, are no trustworthy signs at all; eminent success; the largest self-sacrifice; energy and devotion; the most vivid activity in the pursuit of our calling; present self-satisfaction and self-approbation; the good opinion of the world and the religious; all are possible to co-exist with a heart which has for ever drifted from God, as its object, and has forfeited for ever pardon, peace, and heaven.

SERMON II.

THE MINISTER IN THE WORLD.

DANIEL.

1 Cor. vii. 31.

"Use this world as not abusing it."

There are many solemn, soul-stirring words in Holy Scripture about one source of evil which seems rife with peril to the soul; and yet there are many definitions of those words, and few exactly agree with each other.

That which Holy Scripture has called and condemned as "the world," is a thing concerning which most persons have a view of their own, but find it hard even for themselves to embody that view into a definition; all feel that it comprehends something full of peril and evil, but each man alters his standing with regard to it according to his own mode of life, educational prejudice, or the school to which he belongs.

With respect to it the Word of God speaks thus solemnly. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him: for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the

lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Again, St. Paul says, "Be not conformed to this world." Then again there is an emphatic and significant force in that temptation of Satan's of our Blessed Lord. He speaks of "the glory of the world," which he offers to yield to our Saviour on the condition he demanded, as if there was a peculiar power in that glory which was at that moment hostile to the people and kingdom of our Lord.

These views shew that in that thing, "the world," whatever it may mean, there is some inherent evil, some dark tendencies which assail the soul, some peculiar attraction in it to draw out the evil of our own nature.

The definition of this idea has been as various as the character, lives, and schools of men could make it. To some the word "world" has been synonymous with all intercourse whatever with the human race beyond the immediate limits of their own family, including in this exclusion even the intercourse with man for performance of necessary business and the transactions of daily life. According to such interpreters the use and enjoyments of nature and of art, the admiration of the beautiful, alike in sculpture, painting, or music, the study of the laws by which heavenly or earthly bodies are moved and regulated, historic precedent, and the acts of men of a past age, have been alike placed beneath a ban, and been excluded from the lawful enjoyments of a Christian man.

To others "the world" has a more confined limitation; they are themselves trenching in their daily life on the ground prescribed above, and to make their own position safe and secure they must draw a wider limit for their own standing-ground: and consequently they push off further the line which bounds the world from themselves. To them the excitement of actual guilt, the gambling-house, the display of the theatre, the tavern where vice is unblushing, and the peace and prudence of family and social life bartered for the false satisfaction of the passing hour, are sufficient terms by which to designate the world, and to explain the nature of that whose glory is the enemy of God.

Others will extend the limit wider still; a more extravagant vice, a more wreckless sin, a more open profligacy, suggests the idea of the world they had renounced: while the fascination of a life which knits the soul to earth and not to God, which unfits for prayer or devotion, holy Communion or self-examination, are alike received within the boundary line of their permitted infirmities.

It is not my object here to follow up by minute detail the various opinions on this term; I simply wish to deduce one common notion concerning it drawn from the common ground which each phase of opinion will occupy.

The various opinions are liable to countless objections and difficulties, while each contain their own element of truth and good. The one will err on the side of excess by making the limitation line

of the world sufficiently elastic to embrace all the individual desires of the definer; while others erring on the side of over-definition, fall into the error of a narrow view and a narrow mind, and by over-strictness are compelled daily to give the lie to their professed aim, by forming a world within the little prescribed sphere, or by being obliged to invent excuses for continual and unavoidable deviations to the right hand and the left. Narrowness of mind, irregularity of application, blind partiality to self, are among the many difficulties into which men are constantly driven in their views on this subject. Nevertheless, however difficult and almost impossible of actual and satisfactory definition it may be, any thing which is so denounced in Holy Scripture must demand of us a full and anxious enquiry and investigation.

This then we at least can surely gain from the conflicting views on the subject. There is a visible Church which comprehends within its limits many who will not belong to the invisible; and however obedient to the general external rules of that body as interpreted by the mass of men about us, there are multitudes who are living lives, and conforming to practices, which the good sense of men generally cannot but feel to be alien to the spirit of God and His Church, which nevertheless cannot be excluded by the definite limits of any prescribed rule.

There are scenes of daily vocation and amusement, full of the dazzle of grandeur and magnificence, and the peril of the influence of position

and wealth, which are all included by all good men in the prescribed limits of the world and its votaries. More or less extensively, as men are more or less willing to narrow or expand their desires, still the widest view of "the world" will include the ideas here suggested. The splendour of wealth, the busy mart and scene of commerce, the exciting game where much is staked, the race course, the thoughtless scenes of midnight gaiety, at once suggest to many minds of the more religious the idea of "the world;" and in proportion as the soul becomes devoted to God and the abnegation of self, in that proportion we shall find that scenes such as these will come in its estimation within the limitations of this word as used in Holy Scripture.

Now whatever difficulty may exist with regard to the position of men generally in these scenes I have thus described, for the clergy, on whom holy hands have been laid, there is a special difficulty; they feel that more than for others caution is peculiarly necessary for them, and that they at least cannot enter such scenes without a peril a hundred times increased above that of common men.

With this view it is very remarkable to notice, that some of God's most eminent saints in the Old Testament were not only living in scenes which were emphatically worldly, but were placed there by the immediate dispensation of God; that their lot of life was cast in those very circles which were rife with danger and peril to the soul, and which, to the minds of any class of religious per-

sons, would come within the definition of "the world."

Nothing can be more various than the lives of God's people in the Old Testament amongst the manifold cases of those who lived in the haunts of men, and others whose whole lot was cast in the more quiet scenes of life. God ordered it in each case, and it may in no small degree aid us in studying the question of a clergyman's position in what is called the world, to consider the cases of those people of God, whose life was spent within its sphere.

God formed His saints very often in the most unlikely scenes, and brought out marvellous self-devotion from places and spheres where self-devotion seemed unknown. Like the disciples in the boat at Gennesaret, so God has often "constrained" His people to enter the world, and to sail over its stormy surface amid its most tempestuous waves, when they would fain have sought a calm retreat. Some He kept from it, and fostered their aims at saintliness in the quiet of domestic life, or solitary seclusion. Joseph, Daniel, and David, were formed in that very sphere, and their brilliance came out in the very scenes which would have dimmed ours. Moses was drawn out of the world to be formed for his work and character, and Jacob and St. John the Baptist were led to the high position of the saints of God in the stillness of the domestic life, and the cave of the desert.

Now what God did for them His greatest saints,

may be, to a certain degree, a type of what He may do for us; and what they were permitted and led to do, at least, may be the life which we are permitted and led to pass. The same mould which formed them may form us, and the same scenes which they passed through unhurt, may also be passed by us without damage. But this at least is clear; if we take their lives as indicating a permission to us to lead a certain life, we must be guarded by the same protections, hedged around by the same defences, and live by the same rule; if the "world" is to be a safe passage for us to heaven, it must partake of the same nature that their world did to them, and Joseph's life at the court of Egypt, or Daniel's at Babylon, must be a type to us of our life in the world of this day.

And we must remember we are not here considering the lives of ordinary servants of God; we are not holding up to ourselves the lives of men, who in a common way served Jehovah: we speak of men who were eminently saints, who were elevated above the ordinary standard of holiness, and who are recorded among God's greatest servants. Daniel forms one of the catalogue of the three who were mentioned by the prophet Ezekiel, as specially under God's favour, and Joseph is alike the type of Christ, and the guardian of the chosen people.

A few passages may serve to shew their position in the world, and those few will be enough to convince us that they were called to live in what we

should emphatically designate by the title I have mentioned.

a. Having said of Daniel that "He lived before the king" of a court at that day singular and marked for splendour, luxury, and wealth; it is said that "the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon," and "Daniel sat in the gate of the king." In this court he continued to dwell, and here and there his name appears, but always in connection with a sumptuous court, a splendid palace, a worldly scenery, until at length we read the scene which closed his connection with the Babylonic dynasty, at Belshazzar's feast: "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, and his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone." Such is the account of the court where Daniel dwelt, marked alike by its splendour, its worldly fascinations, its profligacy, and its profanity; and yet here Daniel dwelt, in this he moved, and at the beck of the king he came and went into his presence.

The handwriting on the wall alarmed Belshazzar and his company, and the queen suggested the summons of Daniel. "Then was Daniel brought

in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel?" And Daniel, interpreting the vision, was "clothed with scarlet, and they put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be third ruler in the kingdom."

Here it is plain Daniel received the honours thrust on him by the court; it is equally clear that for profligacy, blasphemy, and splendour, the court was exceeded by none, and yet Daniel thought it right to abide and sojourn in it. And long afterwards, when the court and power had passed into other hands, "Daniel still prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian."

b. In the same way Joseph was called to scenes of hazard and peril, and was surrounded, equally with Daniel, by the fascinations and dangers of the world. For of him, too, it is said, that he was over Pharaoh's house, and according to his word was all the people ruled, only on the throne was Pharaoh greater than he. "And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

I adduce these passages to shew that every term which would bring before our mind the idea of

splendour, power, influence, and rank, is used to shew Joseph's position, to which he consented, and into which God led him at the court of Egypt.

The same line of thought is suggested in the case of David and many other of God's people, whose saintly characters were formed in the very scenes which are elsewhere declared hostile to God.

Now what have we before us here; we have some of the most eminent saints of God not only living in the world, but living in the most dangerous scenes of it, and not only that, but their very characters formed in it and by it, and coming out of it polished and shining jewels, fit for the most prominent places in God's Church; while, on the other hand, we find men who with most striking caution shunned it, and avoided even the taint of its touch. To the Baptist and to Mary Magdalene, it seemed rife with peril, and the holy characters of the Blessed Virgin and St. John the Apostle were formed in the calm seclusion of meditation and retirement. In a day like this, when no lines are very clearly drawn between men, and still less between the world and the Church; when there are so many amongst us whose opinions are doubtful, and their practices more than doubtful; when religion has become fashionable; when the vocation of many of the clergy seems to be within the reach of that very breath which they feel sure is tainted with poison to the soul, and when many more are perhaps led on by self-deceit to imagine it their sphere and vocation; it is of the utmost importance to see what

that spirit was with which God's saints of old entered the world, and what was the preparation He made them go through to be proof against the danger. Without that same preparation, and that same spirit, we shall find our peril great, if we venture ourselves within its reach. On a little consideration we shall perhaps find that so severe was their preparation, so deep their self-abnegation, so entire their loss of self in the will of God, that the process alone of preparing would take off every single charm the world possessed, and would make a life of seclusion, nay, even the desert, preferable to the court of princes. How many would perhaps shrink back from what they now covet and invent excuses to enjoy, if they passed through that ordeal first, which in His Eye is necessary to make such a life consistent with love to Him.

Holy brethren, the very breath of the world is laden with poison to us; we can scarcely breathe it without peril; we dare not cross its threshold without a vigilance so keen, a preparation so severe, or dread so vivid, as to make any one who is fully alive to this necessity, shrink back with alarm. If we are entering it divested of this, we are cherishing a spirit we shall have reason to tremble for ere long.

But let us see that preparation which God esteemed necessary for Daniel and Joseph in scenes of like peril.

And, first, I would suggest that the great object of God's dealing with each soul, is that soul's indi-

vidual purification and salvation, and that his very position of general influence is ordered for his own well-being. However much the public calling of each man may seem to be that which most strikes our eye, or most affects men generally or ourselves individually,—the real object of each is in God's intention the preparation and refinement of his own particular soul. Consequently, every sphere must be considered as having that aim, and each man is placed in his sphere as being most suited to his personal need. Each of us has a nature, a disposition, a tendency, to be formed into a certain character fitted to occupy our place in eternity: various processes are needed to prepare that character, and each one is refined by a different process. The desert forms one; the domestic circle another; the world another; and the austerity of a more rigorous life a fourth. Retirement is as much necessary for one as publicity is for another; certain scenes and occasions call into play certain virtues, and tend to depress or excite alarm about certain evil tendencies; and we may feel sure that unless we have forcibly and wilfully drawn ourselves away from God's providential guiding and leading hand, we are placed in that sphere most suited to prepare us for eternity. The world was Daniel's and Joseph's sphere; it prepared them for heaven, but only by their resisting it in a certain way and with a certain preparation of mind and life; then only it lost its venom. And what was that? what is that safeguard necessary for our walk through scenes of

worldliness without serious if not fatal detriment to the soul?

1. Let us dwell a few moments on Daniel's case; his step of preparation is a significant one. He was already a captive, and the world he moved in was the world and court of the conqueror of his tribe and nation; one continued mortification of worldliness must have marked his career. The same was true of Joseph; he too was a captive in the land of his greatness. Here is one striking safeguard to their position, and one which was ordered no doubt to save them from the necessary consequence of living in the world; it was a continual check, a constant reminding them of their condition; it was the world of the conqueror, and cast a shadow on all their care for it. And in almost every case where a saint of God was cast into the world and formed within its sphere, we shall remark the same providential provision. Mordecai and Esther were placed in the same kind of life. The practical point here seems rather such as this; if we find by providential arrangement that our call to the world is one which places us in positions of continual thwarting and disappointment, we must rejoice and not complain; it is our safeguard, and one of the safeguards which alone permit us to be in the world. There are many such thwartings; we need not look far for them. Some frailty in ourselves, some infirmity in others, some lack of power, some "thorn in the flesh," some continual remembrance that we have superiors in holiness, in

talent, in power, in influence, all this will continually make the world to us a captivity.

If then we are led to find the world our sphere of action, and in it there arise many drawbacks, let us accept them thankfully as the permission to abide where we are with safety, not strive against them, or place them forcibly aside, or murmur at them because they hinder the full enjoyment which the flesh would have in the world; they may be the rivalry of others, superiority in mind, acuteness, power of display, or influence possessed by those with whom we are doomed to move, the continually being reminded of the fact of our own infirmity or lack of excellence. Our work is to view the world as to us a mighty city which throngs with the enemies of God—our Babylon—where they praise the gods of gold and silver, and desecrate the holy things of the sanctuary—our captivity. Let us no more take root in it than would a stranger in a strange land, and be as jealous of any tendril of our affections clinging round its stays and objects, as a captive would be jealous of letting his love wind around the cell of his banishment.

2. And now mark, secondly, the preparation Daniel made for his entrance into these scenes. His preparation was by severe self-discipline and bodily austerity, by living "on pulse and water," by the taking no pleasant bread, and days and nights of fasting and deep humiliation. The notes of his sojourn are such as these: "Let them give us pulse to eat and water to drink." "I set my

face unto the Lord God, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes." "I was mourning three full weeks, I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." Such are the modes of life which the prophet used amid the palaces and splendours of Babylon. With him the scarlet robe and the chain of gold had little power hung on a body thus prepared, the gorgeous dress of the palace covered the shrine of the saint, and its folds were powerless to excite vanity or pride. The royal raiment, the glitter of pearls, the feast to a thousand of the lords, the wine drank before the thousand, had little effect on the man around whose ears lingered the words of the holy vision which he had gazed on through his three weeks' fast, or to excite the desire of him whose passions were lulled and whose worldly love was paled by the diet of pulse and water, and the sackcloth and ashes. The scarlet robe was lined with the sackcloth it covered, and the chain of gold rested on the neck which had lain prostrate before the Holy One on the banks of Chebar.

With this preparation we must enter the world, without it the world is full of peril. Preparation for scenes of danger is one of the marks of the saint. The expectation of being called to such scenes should be at once allied with a stern dressing of the soul. It is a defensive armour, without which we shall be wounded to death. True we may not know it, even though we enter the conflict

without it; we may not perceive our peril, but it is so nevertheless; and we shall be wounded to death with the poisoned arrow of the world without knowing it; the poison may be slow, but it is sure; and one essential preparation is the discipline of the appetite, the body, the flesh. The greater number of the wounds of the world are inflicted through the aid of these; the luxury of indolence, the soft refinement of manner, the minute attention to the taste, the vanity of personal appearance, the emulation at a more perfect achievement of outward symmetry, all are the results of a bodily estate too well attended to; rude food and hard sleep will tend to lower these: the body in the heat of its animal life, the physical state, our most elevated feelings, and power of association, taste, sentiment, and romance, receive all their glow from our physical being: in that is "the glory of them," that is their dress which decks them as guests of the world rather than as instruments of heaven, that is the molten lead which creeps and welters into their crevices, and spoils all; a hard diet, a hard sleep, a hard rein on tongue, and eye, and ear, will alter all, because they will lower the source from which they spring. Nor is it only a matter of preparation: it must be continued; we must never drop it: the same spirit pervades the life of Daniel; it is mentioned in the first chapter, and in the last. Alike under Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius the Mede, are kindred notices to the pulse and water, and the fast of three days. Any entrance

into the world must be prefaced by it, it must pervade our whole spirit in it; it is only from the cell, the Church, the hidden chamber, that we can safely enter the scenes of that world which "knows not God."

3. The third point we are struck with in Daniel is the life of prayer: we so little realize the real power and need of prayer: its actual efficacy, the tone and habit it induces, its certain answer, its constant witness, make it most powerful and needful for intercourse with the world: we need large prayer, we need a preparation of prayer, we need the continued voice of prayer before and after every entrance into the world, we need it to preserve in the world itself the spirit of constant prayer; a praying mind is the only safe one with which we can dwell there.

When indirectly assaulted with temptation, and who of us can hope to avoid it when by our fall hundreds, nay thousands may fall too! when the temptation returns day after day, and with renewed vigour every morning, who can say how powerful one whole day devoted to prayer and fasting might be to overcome and dim its power? We make so few vigorous efforts, so few ventures, so few bold darings, for Christ's sake; our prayers are so formal, so stated, so meagre, and we wonder we do not prevail. Why should we prevail? men did not so prevail of old. The power and spirit of evil is powerful and energetic. How can we hope to overcome it without the most strenuous efforts. The minister

of God, educated so far above others by his holy calling and awful responsibilities, and assailed so far more vigorously than others from the importance of his position, must throw an equal amount of unwonted energy into his life of prayer. His daily prayer should be more than usually intense, his vivid temptations should be met by the three days' fasting and praying; so, and only so, he can safely dwell in the world. Without this the world to him will be Babylon; with this it will be the scenes of the Church's sojourn, though in captivity.

4. But more, Daniel's life was a continued protest, bold and open, against the customs and spirit of the world in which he dwelt. He alike condemned the sins of Nebuchadnezzar, the decree of Darius, and the blasphemies of Belshazzar. There was no soft compliance, no winning worldlings to the truth by half compliance with their ways, no manifest preference for the soft refinements of the court of Babylon to the sorrows of the dungeon and river-side wanderings of the captive Church; with the latter was his heart, with the former but his bodily presence: he dwelt amid the scenes of the latter; he was ever found by the side of the river where the harp of Judah hung. The banks of Chebar and the inner chamber toward Jerusalem were his accustomed resorts; he was ever "sent for" to the court; he was ever "Daniel of the captivity of Judah, brought out of Jewry." Such was his title, such the rank he bore; his heart was not of the world, though he lived in it; his life was a

long protest against it; would that we were ever manifestly "children of the captivity!" Do we not too often when in the world wear the semblance of the children of the world, of those who aim at casting off as far as lawful the dress of the captivity, their prison garb? instead of loving to be reckoned of the captivity, we come as closely as we may to the spirit and tone of our conquerors. Poor and miserable spirit! We yield too much to the tone of the world; our language wears no dungeon tone; we affect the world in dress, attitude, manner, fashion, custom; we seldom protest.

Too little is it our joy to sit by the rivers of Babylon, and weep "when we remember thee, O Sion, and hang our harps upon the willows that are there;" we look like the world; we do not like being "pilgrims and strangers;" we do not like to be reckoned captives; yet he who is of the captivity must dwell by the river. All this is hard, but it must be; we must hang our harps up; we cannot sing the world's song, or join in the world's ways; Babylon is not Judea, Chebar is not Jordan; the world is not heaven, nor the scenes of earth the Church of the first-born; we must shew that continually; we must even meet it with the same complaint, how can I sing the "Lord's song in a strange land?" We must shew ourselves strangers. The clergyman's family is too often a humiliating picture of the world's domestic life reduced; the same outline, the same figure, a copy of the world, an imitation as far as is lawful, a copy of Babylon. In

the applause given to what seems heroic, bold, and manly, when really stained with actual sin against God; in the feeble condemnation of evil; in permission of heresy; in the defence of the very offence in the powerful and wealthy which we should condemn in the poor; in the manifest satisfaction felt in being recognised as the friends and companions of the gay, the noble, and accomplished; in the esteem for talent above holiness, and position above severity of life, we are yielding to the ways of the world, but little sojourning as pilgrims and strangers amid its scenes. Is it our work to conform the education and accomplishments of our children to the modes adapted to a world who know not God? Is it our work to allow our servants to adopt the phrases all but sinful of those of the world, without reproof, nay, with permission? The life of the clergyman should be a standing protest against the life around him. He is in it, but he does not string his harp to its tunes; he is amid its haunts, but he does not conform to its customs; his window is open three times a-day towards Jerusalem, and he defies alike the ordinances, the customs, and the opinions of the world which "lieth in wickedness;" in it, he must cast in his lot with the lowly and despised, value holiness above talent, and consistency above position. Of course society will not like this, of course this line will be unpopular, but it will succeed; nay more, it is our duty, and that is enough. How is the world to act with a higher stand, if those whose commission is

from heaven live scarcely one step removed from the mode in which the world acts; if there is no elevation of standard, no bold ventures, no contempt for human opinion!

With these cautions the world may be a fit scene for the minister of God, without them it is fraught with imminent peril. Babylon can never be a home for the Israel of God, it can but be a scene of their captivity, it can but be a sojourn of "three score years and ten," it can but be a scene in which he travels "as a stranger and a pilgrim," that is all. The minister of God must be its standard, its living exception, its protest. It should be a pain to him to find it needful to pass through it. Jerusalem is his home, and if his heart be right the world never can be.

SERMON III.

THE INWARD PREPARATION OF THE MINISTER OF GOD.

EZEKIEL AND SAMUEL.

MALACHI iii. 3.

"He shall purify the sons of Levi."

THERE are many passages in Holy Scripture, and many illustrating lives and examples, which shew us that God Himself prepares each person for his appointed work: that a mysterious discipline is ever going on, the building of a temple without noise of the hammer, a silent and refining process. And this inward preparation which He carries on bears to our own outward work on ourselves the same relation as Divine grace does to holy human effort. Still it does not always meet our eye; it is secret, mysterious, and still; its effects are often unknown till death, and sometimes so obscure in the relation of cause and effect that the keenest eye can scarcely discern it. But nevertheless so it is; by night as by day, while we sleep and wake, while we are careful and while we are reckless, the holy process goes on, and we are gradually and irresistibly preparing for the work He would have us do, and the place He would have us fill.

This is emphatically true of the inward preparation for the ministry. God prepares His ministers in His own way, and great, awful, and wonderful, when sometimes we discover it, is His mode of doing it. A mist will occasionally roll away, and we behold that where there was an empty place before, a fair and beautiful temple has risen. We little know when we receive holy orders what a work of inward discipline we from that moment enter on. Precept and example, men of the past and men of the present, alike shew us the fact.

1. We are told by St. Paul in the opening of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, that God achieves certain works in us of affliction or trouble, with the express view of preparing us for a more efficient ministry. See chap. i. ver. 2—7.

"Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort, wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation, And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers

of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation."

He proceeds to say that we have the sentence of death within us that we might learn the shallowness of human strength and power, and the depth and width of Divine grace. ver. 8—10.

"For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us."

Thus he who comes forward to the work of the ministry, at once enters on a course of severe preparation, that he may know by full personal experience the truth of that teaching which he must manifest to a ruined and sinful world: he cannot teach doctrines of spiritual comfort without having realized it, and to do so he must have smarted under God's afflicting hand; he cannot efficiently enforce the need and measure of Divine grace without having been led to lean on it as the anchor and rudder of his soul. The minister must be the type of his own teaching, he must live the life he enforces and urges; he must be the mirror which reflects the image he is ever raising before his people. Thus again, further on in the Epistle, where the Apostle has recounted the sorrows and

trials of the ministry, its troubles, its perplexities, its persecutions, he sums it all up with saying that "all was for their sakes." But I might multiply passages without end which express this view; the whole of the second Epistle to the Corinthians is peculiarly full of it.

2. Significant in the highest degree has been the mark of this in the lives of His ministering servants: they have shewed how God has been with them preparing them for their great vocation. Parallel with the stream of their life has been the work which He has silently carried on in their hearts and lives; His guiding hand is seen in their deep sorrows, their permitted temptations, their domestic bereavements, their trying circumstances; the tale of slander and the scoff of the world: we can scarcely take a view of their ministry without seeing how truly He was with them, though often unseen and unknown to themselves.

a. Among the earliest of those especially set apart for the ministry was Samuel, and in no case is this Divine preparation more striking. He was early taught that the minister of God must be severed from earthly ties and human affections at His call. Though the child of many prayers, and the only son of his mother, he was soon severed from her affection, and led to spend his early years away from the comfort of home in the silent and severe solitude of God's temple. The same ordering of Providence led him to a life of retirement in after days, and he was only permitted to appear at in-

tervals from the sternness of his solitude. His sons ended ill, and in old age as in childhood bereavement and a threatened domestic loss, left the stern prophet of Israel, the anointer of Saul and David, to be wept for by the elders of his people. Domestic trial, and the continual check of the lawful affections of life, seemed the preparation which God gave Samuel; it was His ordering, and His priest bent beneath His Hand: heaven was his home, and God his Father; that was enough.

β. Elijah strikes us equally in a later day. We mark the same work of preparation, and that preparation one of thwarting and disappointment to earthly and human hopes. He, too, was led by God's voice to the desert and the cave: of him no domestic fact is recorded, and no human affection mentioned; he was compelled to see his expectations prevented, and whatever remains of human ambition there might be in him, disappointed; when he complained, he was rebuked. He would see results, and have his ministry honoured by man, and its truths tested. But it was not to be, and he who was to ascend to heaven undying must learn by God's teaching to let all human motives sink in the work of his ministry. God took his life in His own hand, and guided him Himself.

We all know the striking though brief notice of the death of Ezekiel's wife; she was taken away simply that the prophet's conduct might be a type to the people. No sorrow was to be considered by him tantamount to fulfilling in each part his minis-

try; he might not grieve because it would hinder the lesson he was to inculcate.

Jonah's case comes before us in the same way: here, too, the prophet would at first mingle second and human motives with his ministry. He made his preaching an opportunity of personal importance, and would test the one by the result of the other; there was a slight tendency to making a holy calling submit to self, and God taught him his lesson, that His minister must simply live for Him.

γ. And more remarkably still is it shewn in the prophet of the desert. God undertook his education from his childhood up; severe trials, severance from all human ties, lone life, and separation from relatives or companionships, marked emphatically his onward career. The rock, the rough food, the wilderness, were the lot of him whose childhood God took into His own hands. And so it was till death, and that death itself bore the same features.

The same singular care is observable in the lives of all His ministers in the New Testament: severance from earth, forsaking deep domestic affections; outward persecutions, amid fears, and checks given at every turn; keen temptations permitted, strange and mysterious changes in their lot, unaccountable guidings; all shew that with St. John, St. Peter, and St. Paul, as with others, an unseen hand was guiding them, an unfelt arm surrounding them, and a voice which they felt but did not hear, led them and directed them in their journey heavenward.

Such from the Old Testament and the New are

the instances by precept and example of the Divine preparation for the ministry. Let us now apply it to ourselves.

3. We shall observe two or three things from the above cases. The preparation of His ministers chiefly consisted of external trials and discipline; it was through these they were prepared for their work. But there are other modes of inward discipline not so manifest and apparent, still equally a part of His work on the heart, one which is not so likely to appear in the record of men's lives; I mean, permitted inward temptations.

Again, it is striking that it was especially in domestic ties and affections the checks were given in the cases I have referred to above. And in their aim at earthly distinction and success, these two trials peculiarly seem to form part of God's preparation of His ministry.

The existence of temptation teaches us, as St. Paul says, the weakness of nature, and the strength of grace; trials teach the nature of sorrow and the nature of consolation; all together teach us to separate ourselves from earth, and to live for heaven.

Remember our commission is of a magnitude and depth so vast that the Judgment alone will reveal it to our eyes: we have committed to us the charge of souls for whom Christ died: souls surrounded and harassed by continual temptations, and besieged, if our eyes could be opened to see it, by a host of foes, subtle, powerful, and vigilant. It matters not that the many shrink from facing the re-

sponsibility, and none can attempt to meet it fully; it matters not that numbers fly before even a single blow be struck in the conflict. The responsibility is still our own, and the commission equally perilous and tremendous. We have the care of souls, and He who has committed them to us, and who so loved them as to give His life for them, has called us to the high and holy partnership with Himself, and taken care that we shall have the full opportunities of preparation, even though He will not use them, or let them have full influence over us. Those souls will suffer keen temptations, and we are permitted to understand them; many often wander in the labyrinth of despair and darkness, and we are allowed to tread the intricacies of spiritual sorrow that we may give them the clue for escape.

How are we to guide and counsel souls if we have not ourselves sympathized with their distress! It is trite to say, that he who has passed through the same distress for one hour, under which we are labouring, is of more value to us as an adviser than he who has studied that trouble theoretically for years; and with reverence I speak it, that Nature was borne by Him, who is the Bishop of our souls, that He might "know our frame, and remember we were but dust;" for this was the stupendous scene of mount Calvary, for this the agony of Gethsemane, and the Temptation of the desert. "Verily, He took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." And was "in all points

tempted like as we are;" so that "we have not an High-priest who cannot be touched by the feeling of our infirmities." To reach this end He bore sorrows as far more keen than ours as His holy nature was more intensely holy. Surely with this type, this head, this exemplar of our ministry, shall we shrink from sorrow, and the bitter purification of the sons "of Levi?"

The keenness of our temptation enables us to understand the anguish of their sorrow when they pour out their tale, a tale which to one who knew nothing of temptation, would wear the aspect of unreality and hypocrisy. The continual and wearisome nature of temptation, known so well to us in the often repeated sigh at our daily examination and hourly prayer, prevents our checking, or being surprised at, the continual repetition of the tale of sorrow and temptation; we understand it, and can bear with it.

But more than this we need it for ourselves: we are to make "our offering in righteousness," we are to approach "the altar with innocency," and "with clean hands to offer to the Lord." He will have pure and entire devotion in His minister; He is "a jealous God" to all, but how much more to His minister whom He has placed apart for His own service, and especially considered as belonging to Himself. Planted in a soil which is alien to God, His minister tends to cling to the world and this life. Trials, losses, and afflictions, by degrees sever him from earth, and teach him by the bitter-

ness of experience that in God alone is stability and peace. He is fitted for devotion in the sanctuary by having the objects of time taken from him; he is led to be unwearying and self-devoted in the performance of his work, by gradually losing the objects which would naturally have called him from it. The ties which would have been excuses cease to be so, by God Himself removing them, and the cares which would have distracted devotion lose force, by having the object which excited them removed. He will leave no excuse to His minister to be devoted to anything save Himself, and the care of the souls for which He gave His life. And perilous, passing words, is the position of those who being thus under His guidance, strive to deviate from the appointed path, or to place aside the hand which would lead them to highest thrones of heaven. But not only do trials do this work: temptation too severs us from the world; it makes life less dear and God more precious to the soul. Those men whose love and enjoyment of life are so intense that no external loss or trial are able to quench its power; to them keen and continually permitted temptation will do the work that trial does for others, and make life less dear, less interesting, less absorbing.

Those temptations "try him as silver is tried," and while he is subject to them, he is unconsciously the object of attention to countless eyes in the unseen world, who gaze with intent longing to see the end of the conflict.

But I will consider more particularly the case of the minister whom God sees fit to prepare by trial instead of temptation, by outward affliction rather than by the permission of inward assault.

These trials take many forms, and doubtless each one exactly suited to the disposition and circumstances of him they are intended to make ready for his vocation. Sometimes they are domestic and sometimes personal; at other times they will affect a man's social position, and at another, take the line of the injury unjustly of his fair name.

We have seen the minister of God stripped of one member after another of his family; left early to lament the memory of the partaker of his first joys and sorrows, or to pass on his way to the sphere of his self-devotion the earthly resting-place of the children he had striven to train up for the Lord. Affliction not unfrequently takes this form; so much so, that on observation it will often be found that the greater number of diseases of the most sweeping and striking kinds occur in the houses of those who are consecrated to God's service in the sanctuary, and especially is this the case with those who, by their influence, example, or position, are to have an effect on the generation they move in, and the day they are called to minister in.

It is not unfrequent that trial takes a more personal form, and weakness of health, intellectual incapacity, and infirmities of other kinds, hinder that amount of usefulness which men see others capable of, and yearn after for themselves. With such, life

is often a continued disappointment, and they are driven back as often as they advance, to feel that while others are possessed of powers they often neither know how, nor care to use themselves, they, with the will to employ them, have them not.

Deep poverty; the difficulty of gaining bare subsistence; the anguish of seeing families grow up, for whom there is no prospect on the stage of life, except they sink to another grade of society from that on which their father moved; is another form of sorrow with which God often sees fit to purify His ministry on earth.

Another class of trial which the ministers of God are often called to suffer under is, the false estimate formed of them by the world around, or the society in which they move. Intending well, they often have to smart for years under imputations as false as they are malicious, and to have their motives mistaken when they were most clear and honourable to the eye of any impartial observer.

We shall specially find that the minister of God will suffer from these trials and privations when he is about to receive any new position of importance and influence: the way to which is paved for him by sorrow, and the loss of the world's ease and comfort. As a matter of experience and observation this will be strikingly the case, and we shall see that offered position and office will quickly follow on some withering blow which has made life cheerless, has taken away the enjoyment of any

such elevation, and has rather made responsibility irksome than honour and fame agreeable.

The effect and object of these trials and temptations are threefold. They enable the minister of God to understand and sympathize with the spiritual condition of those he has to guide, they purify worldly affection from his own heart, and enable him to be an example to the people of God of patience and devotion under God's hand. And when we come to consider these reasons, they appear so palpable and manifest, that we only wonder that our trials are so small as they are, and that our preparation is not more severe than it is.

The efficacy we have found in grace enables us to lead others to the same fountain of life, and to point to a certain source of victory, when human effort and human reasoning have failed. That grace would be but a theory, an idea to us, if we had not been driven to shelter ourselves beneath it, as a shadow of a "great rock in a weary land."

When our people are bowed down in sorrow and earthly affliction, we, who have been purified in the furnace of sorrow, can understand their silent and solitary tear, can weep with them when they weep, and, above all, can lead them to the same consolation of which we have deeply drunk. The doubts we have suffered from teach us how to value theirs, and enable us to make them feel that they have not been tempted by any temptation they are not able to bear, nor one which has not "been common to man." The rule we have found useful and

efficacious to ourselves is found equally so for them; and our advice and preaching receive all their point and force, by having been ourselves the monuments of the mercy we proclaim.

Bitter and deep experience has taught the purified minister the meaning and truth of the complaint of the "continued effort all in vain;" of the constantly broken resolution, of the cold shadow crossing the sunshine of devotional warmth. The anxious question, can this temptation and that be consistent with a state of grace? Can doubts so often returning co-exist with saving and living faith?

Without experience all these would be expressions without meaning; portraits rather than living beings; cold and barren ideas, having no answer in the reality of practical life. It is our sorrows, our temptations, our purification, which give them point and reality, and enable us to understand at once the tale they find it hard to express, impossible to explain. This is the great and palpable reason for our severe ordeal of preparation.

We may, then, take this for granted, that the minister of God will receive his perfection from God, and that he will himself be the obstacle to its full work if there be one at all. He is to occupy a higher place here and hereafter; he is cut off from the world around; he is one of a separate body, and for that he requires a distinct preparation, of a severer kind than others; never mind if he shrinks from it, or if he says I never

intended to enter on such a life; he has cast in his lot with God's ministry, and he must bear the consequences either for happiness or woe. It is to him a refining process, like purifying silver; every word used about it in Holy Scripture is strong and searching, and expresses no slight, no common preparation.

There are cases of God's ministers who seem to have no external trial, earth smiles upon them; the sun of life seems always in its morning, no clouds obscure it; they succeed in their work, they have few domestic afflictions, they succeed in what they put their hands to, they have the good will and good word of even the world around, they gain places of influence and position, from which they can command a more extended usefulness; they seem happy and cheerful themselves; there has been no point in life of keen sorrow or depression, to which they must look back and feel "from that sorrow dates my life of fitness;" and yet they have nothing about their lives to make us doubt their truth and sincerity; they seem in earnest, and have their hearts honestly and truly fixed on God; there is nothing that makes us waver about them, they seem consistent, holy, and devoted; and we ask where is their preparation? and this question is forced on us with ten-fold the force when we look round and see some picture of striking and mysterious contrast.

While in another parish we see the minister of God as pre-eminent in chastisement, sorrow, and bereavement, as he is in calling, like a land-mark

to a storm, it seems as if, in the emphatic words of Jonah, "all the billows and waves had gone over him." Child after child gathered to the grave, and numbered among the early dead, his schemes for good hindered and suspended, his active usefulness stopped without apparent cause, his sacred life blighted and withered, his best intentions misconstrued, and a false interpretation placed on all his conduct; moved from place to place, he is allowed no home feeling in the world, no residence where he may allow his affections to come out or his associations to cling; and yet all the while around him men of inferior power and lower claims are successful, prosperous, and happy.

These contrasts are common, and they are as mysterious and remarkable as common. There seem one or two explanations; it pleases God to prepare and test some of His ministers by temptations as He does others by adversity, and often under the apparent success and tranquillity of life aches a heart assailed by conflicting and warring passions, as rent and distracted as any can be by external sorrow and trouble. Though on such a one the sun seems ever to shine with morning cloudlessness, it shines on the surface of a soul, whose centre is careworn, round which the winds and blasts of temptation howl with maddening fury; he passes on through the success of outward schemes from one step to another, envied, gazed at with wonder, while he is scarcely conscious of the world's surprise and utterly unconscious of satisfaction; nay, willing to

part with all his outward prospect and condition to gain one season of peace from temptation or one sure hope of heaven. Few read their hearts, perhaps but one has ever heard its secret woe, perhaps none, "the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." Burning lust, vanity, boundless ambition, fear of man paralyzing every act of duty, weigh on the spirit, and test and purify the heart as fully as external sorrow and trial.

These different modes of treatment depend perhaps on men's different dispositions and circumstances: severe temptations may be necessary to form one character which is to be prepared for heaven; for another, external trial is necessary to make up for the utter absence of inward temptation.

But there are further differences beyond these of God's treatment of His ministers: some are prepared through intellectual and some through sensual temptation. To a certain class of mind, severe intellectual trials are as powerful and critical as sensual ones are to another. Under some of these heads we shall find we may be able to read nearly every case of the minister of God.

There are of course exceptions, cases where the minister of God has resisted the touch of the purifying Hand, and either by murmuring at trial or yielding to temptations, has forfeited the blessed effects of the one or the other: any one may do this if he will, and, if he often continue resistance,

and temptations still remain, it is a sign of God's never-failing mercy and long-suffering, not of his being in a sound and healthy state. It is an awful thing to draw away from God's preparing hand,—to be found fighting against Him.

The experience of men's lives has shewn this, the lives of God's people of every day since the beginning, the daily conflicts of His ministers; the higher their position and calling, the more elevated their post, the more singular their example, the severer and keener is the temptation they are assailed with: the knowledge of many a confessor would, if known, bear striking witness to this truth. It is true many in high places experience no such sorrow, and are conscious of no such conflict; but it is that they have shrunk from the strife or failed in the ordeal, and their calm condition is but the precursor to the senselessness of moral death.

All this would tell us, if we knew every thing, that His minister, though apparently moving in perfect tranquillity, and under an unbroken sunshine, is assailed by desires to sin so intense as to need hourly prayer to resist them, and continual devotion to strengthen the soul. Sometimes they will take the form of impure sensations so distressing as to make his path seem hedged in, with no escape from the labyrinth into which Satan tries to lead him; desires so urgent that each relation of his ministerial life seems only to evoke some new form of this terrible spectre; every portion of his vocation seems to call it out more painfully, and

the necessary personal intercourse he is called to in guiding or warning members of his flock, only brings him into continual and painful collision with the temptation he dreads. It is by that very temptation he is preparing for his work here, and his place hereafter; it is no sign of his being deserted by God or of his being in a state of reprobation. It is rather a sign that God is close at hand, and allowing him to be purified in the furnace of temptation, that he may the better aid and sympathize with those who are tempted, and the better test his love and devotion to God. Vanity attacks him, and so mixes with his very nature, that though he prays and toils earnestly against his terrible companion, still if he can mark but one act of pure intention in the day, it becomes a green and fertile spot on the desert, which is rare and refreshing to his eye. The very acts he tries to do for God become stained with the desires of popularity or advance in life, which mingle with his heart and motive, like polluting waters flowing into the tide of an onward river. He strives to separate the act from the false motive, but he finds it at last so impossible that he yields it in despair, and is tempted to doubt if such a thing as purity of motive exist at all: he finds it as hard to decide this as to separate odours from the air they infect; since every action of his life becomes the channel, the atmosphere, through whose infected medium his soul receives a poisonous disease. Every step he is called to make to the greater exercise of his calling becomes a new

stage in the career of ambition; or Satan is allowed to attack him by way of doubts cast upon his soul. Familiar with holy things, Satan persuades him he but acts them, and that the truth he has to impress on another fails in sincerity through the very process he adopts to enforce it. Himself the consecrator, he is tempted to question the power of consecration; himself the solver of doubts, he is tempted to imagine himself a special pleader. Standing on the proximate step of the ladder by which his people ascend to God, he imagines there is a mist between him and the holy One, and that the truths he reveals to others are but illusory visions or imaginary ideas. Brought into close connection with holy things, he feels himself as it were behind the scene, and is tempted at every turn to doubt the validity of his convictions and the truth of his teaching.

These temptations may take another form; the love of the world may haunt him at every step; the enjoyments of social life, the soft kindnesses and reciprocations of society, the attention and homage which as a member of society the minister will often receive, the influence and weight which his words will gain, the power he has to win attention, and the barrier which the reception of holy orders at once overleaps for many, raising them from unimportance and insignificance into a position of weight and influence; all are to certain classes of minds temptations of a severe description, and tend to peril highly, if they do not ruin, the soul they

attack. The difficulty very often of defining the boundary line between right and wrong, between duty and pleasure in these matters, is so great, as to make life all but burdensome to the sensitive conscience; and this temptation may especially exist unknown to the very society among which he moves; so that men may think him living out of the world, singularly devoted to his work, and holding in its due estimation its frivolous pleasures, while, really ashamed of himself, he yearns after the most trifling occasions of its enjoyments, and feels unconcerned for the highest calls of his ministry, dull in the most pointed and soul-affecting scenes, while he morbidly regrets some opportunity of worldly distinction he has thought it his duty to forego, or some source of enjoyment he has hesitated to accept.

Such is the value of sympathy in temptation. Our conversation is essentially to be in heaven; we are to speak of it, to explain it as a land which we well know; we must understand the nature of its pathways, and the difficulties of those who may yet reach the heavenly gate. We must be full of it ourselves, and take of our own fulness to impart to others; and while we love the world, are rooted to it, are bound to it, and make its fashions the measure of our life, we shall be unfit to be the special and commissioned representatives of that kingdom upon earth. Trial uproots that affection, and compels us to fix our life in heaven; our heart is forced to be there, that

we may be able to induce others to fix their treasure in heaven too; our wills are rebellious; the grace of ordination, and the imposition of holy hands, have not eradicated that nature.

But there is a third object of these temptations and trials; His ministers are like a city set on a hill, a light shining in a dark world. They are the living types of the truths of religion; they are the scenes in which the power of those truths is illustrated. Men need living types and exemplifications of the truths they believe and hold, and the minister of God exactly occupies this position. Example does more than precept, and a living type than the most strenuous and earnest statements. Facts are needed to make principles tangible; and the sight of patience, reliance on grace, and resistance of evil, do more than any thing else to induce men to apply them. I say it with reverence, it was for this our Blessed Lord took on Him our nature that He might manifest in Himself the sufferings and obedience of the human estate. His ministers in this respect are as He is, the illustration of sacred truths, the exemplification of exalted principles.

One object of the Incarnation was to exemplify as well as to teach the truths of religion. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," that He might shew by obedience, dependence, and patience, the will of God, as well as teach it with His word. In this high and holy work we are joined to Him; His ministers are fellow-workers with Him, and if we shrink from bearing the sorrows and de-

nial of that example, we are unworthy to be His companion in our holy labour.

He bore the loss of all things to accomplish His ministry; the privation of heaven, the sojourn on earth, that we might bear without shrinking a denial and sorrow which after all is but our due and inheritance, and to which is annexed a reward transcendent above all conceivable merit. What we teach we must manifest; the sermon must be the text to the life; we must "shew forth by the life as well as the doctrine;" we are placed in the sphere of our labour as a centre of attraction, and the object to which the eyes of men around us are to turn to see the meaning and interpretation of the doctrines we inculcate. Grace must be shewn to be all-sufficient by the conquest of our own tempers and passions; the Blessed Spirit must be shewn to be a comforter by the calmness and tranquillity of our lives under chastisement and sorrow. Our work is but partly done in public ministration; it is at home, and in the heart and life the minister of God does his great work, and has his great influence. The public ministration without the example of the life is as a text in an unknown tongue, without interpretation or translation.

Such are the three objects of sorrow to the minister of God; self-discipline, sympathy, and example. And to effect these ends sorrow and temptation are specially needful, specially fit. They are the hammers and chisels by which the stone which is placed before us unhewn is to be prepared for

its place in the Temple of the Lord: that work is our own while God gives us the opportunities and the instruments.

It is true some men have the opportunities but do not use them; some have neglected the surface of the rough wall, the anvil, and the hammer; but what of that; there they lie, witnesses at the last account. If they neglect opportunities it is their matter, and theirs will be the penalty. What were the reprobation of Judas and the rejection of Demas but this? It is true that many of His ministers often appear to bask in the sunshine of prosperity and worldly success, but who can say how in such cases, it has been a resistance of some intense conviction, or casting aside unused some bitter sorrow.

It may cross our mind often, may I receive these chastisements as from God, as really the sign of being a special object of His love? Is it not sin, the indulgence of my own inclinations and infirmities, which has brought down judicially these results upon me? Are they not in the common course of providence the effects of necessity of my own yieldings, my own self indulgence? In many cases this may be true, nay more! in all cases it must be partially so. But this does not prevent the work from being His, and immediately pointing to the object which He has for His minister on earth. Our sin and our punishments may be overruled for good, and the course of His providence is still achieved, though our eyes rest immediately on but the secondary causes.

This view of our position is at least full of comfort and encouragement. Our temptations are permitted, and are rather signs of our being specially objects of His regard, than aught else. Emphatically it is true of us, "whom He loveth He chasteneth." The stone which is to occupy the highest place in His Temple, is that which needs the greatest preparations and the keenest cutting. Of course that comfort depends simply on the amount of our resistance of evil, and our patient bearing of sorrow. When once temptation becomes a part of self, and the door of the soul is opened to admit it, then our peace must pass away, and our position becomes as deeply fraught with peril as it was before highly elevated and blessed. And it is in no small degree awful to feel that we may pass that barrier-line without knowing it; that while yesterday we were the objects of the chastisements of a merciful Father, to-morrow we may be past hope, reprobate, and ruined; and yet we may be the same in feeling as we were before, and neither to our own inmost gaze, nor to the observation of our nearest friend, may we be in the least degree changed after we have passed that line which really has made all the difference to us of life or death eternal.

We should gain an awe and reverence for sorrow; we should gain a sacred dread of temptation; there is more in them than we think. They are messengers laden with a mission of high import to our soul: we little know their weight and value, and the work for the long future they may be laden

with. We are as a painter's canvass and a sculptor's marble; the one reaches perfection by addition, the other by privation; our temptations become the means of the perfections of holiness, our trials the instruments of striking away the last roughness of the world and of the flesh.

SERMON IV.

THE MINISTER IN A DAY OF SPIRITUAL DEPRESSION.

ELIJAH.

1 KINGS xviii. 30.

"And he repaired the altar that was broken down."

THE act described here is remarkable and significant. Israel had departed from the true service of God; all but seven thousand had bowed the knee to Baal. Idolatry, as ever, was now their crying sin, the sin which led them away from God, sullied the purity of their hearts, corrupted their knowledge, and impaired their powers of understanding His ways. Still the Church of God existed among them. He continued to speak to them by prophets and by visions, by signs and by tokens; but their heart was not with Him, their heart was after their gods, the objects of their lust; the prophets spoke in vain, and God shewed tokens which had lost their force. By degrees the light was being quenched, and the voices of warning or teaching sinking to a whisper. The monarch was, by his office, closely joined with the Church of the Jews, and the corruption of the one was connected with the profligacy of the other. Still, God was "long-

suffering and full of compassion," He would again strive with His people, and Elijah the Tishbite arose to rebuke the king and to rouse the people. The place of meeting was fixed, and on Mount Carmel the matter was to be decided whether they would follow God or Baal. The false prophets raised their altars and invoked their gods in vain.

To one prophet of the Lord it was left to call back Israel to the knowledge of God, to restore the purity of His worship, to revive the well-nigh forgotten sacrifice, to kindle the spark which still glimmered, however low, of the manifestation of God's Presence, and to replace His law in the hearts of His people. There was still a small number to whom he could appeal, a few who had lived among and used the ordinances of God, who shewed forth their power, and were witnesses of their existence; of their existence as a Church preserving the worship of Jehovah; of their power, by being kept amid the surrounding apostacy.

Under such circumstances at the top of the mountain, the prophet of the wilderness, the type of the great messenger, raising no new altar, nor calling them to leave their present seemingly false position, built up "the altar of the Lord which was broken down." The sacrifice was offered and was accepted, God answered the effort at reviving His well-nigh forgotten worship by a token, and Israel cried out, "the Lord He is God." The prophets of Baal were slain, Ahab was humbled, and the worship of the Lord restored.

But there are facts connected with it which are striking. It was in Samaria not in Jerusalem that Elijah lived and rebuilt the ruined altar: it was in the Church as she was in Samaria, unaccustomed to the temple worship or the highest ministrations of the priesthood, that the solitary prophet lived and stayed, that the "seven thousand" were preserved from idolatry, and that the people were brought back by a divine token to serve God with increase of devotion and faith. The sins of the royal houses had long lowered in the horizon, and the people had been accustomed to see the ordinances of God long despised. The consequence was natural, the true worshippers had diminished gradually in number, and only seven thousand were left, and they apparently obscure, and occupying no position of influence. They might have said, "Why wonder, any how we are but a portion of His Church, without the high privilege of temple sacrifice, of a living priesthood, of a holy ceremonial, of a visible glory, without the power of the temple standing among us, the gracious and life-giving associations of the city of David and the house consecrated by Solomon. We have not the Ark or the testimony, the Urim or the glory; Jerusalem has these, and by them Judah lives and fears God. We are but Samaria, our people sink away in sin, they forget God, there is scarce aught to remind them, He lives not here. A sinful court and king follow idols, and the people follow them. The act of a wicked king, impatient of waiting the

Lord's time, divided us from the temple; Jeroboam revolted against Rehoboam, and we were finally severed from the holy Presence. The wicked king set up his altars at Dan and Bethel." True, all of it; still there were "the seven thousand." They were holy, marked, sealed, known of God. Elijah repaired the ruined altar where it stood at the hour of evening sacrifice; he revived the strength there was, he kindled from the spark the flame, and God answered it. They had been severed by the movement of Jeroboam; he was sinful, yet God had ordered it. He overruled it, in the deep things of His kingdom on earth. It had been fore-ordained and foretold. What seemed the work of Jeroboam was the work of God, and may-be, for the sins of Israel, the low state of her privileges in the Church were judicial. At least Elijah was content to be patient, and do his best at the shattered altar, and his work was blest; and when shortly after, his spirit broke with seeing the still returning, still living spirit of idolatry, and he complained, the awful voice met him in the caverns of Horeb, rebuked him for impatience, and bid him be working at repairing the ruined state of God's worship in the kingdom where he was. "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

But the point I would dwell on is the repairing of the altar, the restoring to its own and old work the ruined pile of Mount Carmel, the revival of a holy work which had fallen into disuse, but the memorial of which had, by God's mercy, not passed away. There were the ruins, there lay the stones,

and by them Elijah recalled the people to the true worship of God, and revived the teaching of the Church in a day of pervading idolatry. Who can say how far the idolatry of our people has been the means of the Church's decay, the having objects of pursuit apart from God. We live amid a kindred tendency; "covetousness which is idolatry" is perhaps the crying sin of our own people, and may have been the cause of our altar being so broken down, our outward fabric so injured; objects of pursuit alien from God which are pursued at the expense of devotional hours and attendance at holy worship, must tend to draw the heart from Him and the system which leads to Him. Cause becomes effect, and effect cause, and the ruined altar caused by idolatry remains unrepaired and becomes a cause of increased idolatry. It was Elijah's work, through that altar, restored to its true and ancient work, to recal the people to God; and it may be ours, through the revival of holy customs and practices with the materials which are left us, though they lie in ruins around us, to stem the tide of idolatry and infidelity, to bring back our people to God, and from the neglected altar of the Church to shew by visible tokens that God is still among us. Nor to do it repiningly. Our work may be hard, our task look impossible, and we may be ready to say, "Let me die, I cannot do the work, I am no better than my fathers." "The remaining privileges and aids are so few, actual opposition so great." Still may this not be impatience. May we not, re-

tiring from our work and leaving the stones of the altar (which was given us to keep) in scattered heaps, hear the voice, "What doest thou here? yet are there seven thousand." Nay more, we are to learn our life's work from Elijah; while we are bid work and be unwearied, we are penitents still; ours is not the time and place for triumph or ease. The prophet of Samaria must dwell in the wilderness; he went thither in the intervals of his labour; he must prepare for his toil in caverns and solitude; but he must not linger there; he is to be penitent, though for the people active; he is to be solitary, yet amid multitudes; a dweller amid rocks and caves, amid roughness and denial, yet at the same time a repairer of the ruined altar amid the thunders of Mount Carmel.

We, my brethren, have a double work to do, energetic work, and patient penitence. But beware of the former without the latter. As we said, cause becomes effect, and effect cause. Idolatry caused the ruin, and the despised altar perpetuated idolatry. The smallness of religious privilege and advantage offered in Samaria, may have increased idolatry, and given it a more rapid and easy rise and advance; and the fact of that scantiness of privilege may have seemed a reason for counting the work of revival hopeless. But it was not so; Elijah's work of revival was in Samaria, and on Carmel. He was to improve the state of things, to perfect the means in which he and they were placed. *Where* they were was providential, *how* they improved it was their

own. However small the state of privilege, God was with them and worked amongst them.

Holy brethren, it is clear that idolatry is stealing the hearts of those committed to our charge; they neither serve nor know God. Shall I say any thing at variance with the experience of those who have spiritual charges, when I say that the English people generally are peculiarly ignorant of objective religion, less conscious of the facts of the creed they profess, less removed from a state of mere natural religion, than many from whom we expect far less; that many a Mahometan or a heathen are more conscious of the nature, attributes, acts, and requirements of the being they serve, than our own people are of the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity; while the heathen has that clear consciousness and realization of his relation to the object of his worship, which will bear him up through the severest self-denial, and lead him on to the most entire self-devotion, to our people the method of the holy Incarnation, the Atonement, or the great intercession, are unmeaning words, or sounds without attraction: that, in fact, of late the state of our people has been a discredit to us? Living in a branch of Christ's holy Catholic Church, boasting great things, and having great blessings, they are far outrun by the worshippers of false and imaginary deities in their progress from a state of mere natural religion. Our own experience must tell us this: our people, if we converse with them, are frequently ignorant of the simplest facts of Christianity, and it has become a

matter of proverbial merriment with many in the higher ranks of society, that they could be defeated by a Sunday school child in the knowledge of Christian truth. Such is our knowledge, and the growth of infidelity and sin tells us that the result is as we should expect. We are far from God, so were the idolaters of Israel. Their excuse was the smallness of Church privilege; still, however small, it had formed the characters of seven thousand, and was enough, when worked upon penitently and patiently, to bring the rest back to God.

We have an altar, through and by which our people may be led to God: the Church and her system. God has given us a nature, an inward nature, with certain yearnings, certain leadings, certain tendencies and desires, which are continually seeking for themselves a home, and (till they find that formal system which we may call their end and home) they are ungratified and incomplete. They are ever seeking that end and object, and without it, return like a flood upon themselves, overwhelming the other parts of the moral character. Inward powers of reverence or shame, a yearning for sympathy, love of the beautiful in form and matter, powers of association, desires after regularity, system, and order, burning zeal; lawful desires after some end or object, which misguided becomes ambition; deep powers of poetry, and capacity of influencing others; all these and many more are inward powers, graces, tendencies, which require some forms to draw them out, to give them

a home and a vent. An objective system must be found for them or they will find one for themselves. God made that internal nature; He planted those inward longings, and he has supplied the external system which is their body and home; and there is but one that He has given, and that one embraces and finds a place for all—the *Church*. Her system is an external form, receiving every power, giving them an outline infinitely pliable and capable; here in her external form depressed, there extended, as the inward feelings require the one or the other; a perfect temple, with every form, line, and variation in harmony, forming one whole; giving space, as it were, (in the formal of her lofty towers,) for an energy which requires expansion; or receiving along the beautiful lines of her aisles and roof the feelings which love to find their way in holier or more chastened discipline. She is the formal, the system which can alone give a home to the inward nature. She is divinely appointed; she comes from the same Hand that the subjects she is to receive come from, so she is well suited, carefully adapted; and so fitted is she to the work, that the one is unable to exist really or with any approach to perfection, without the other. Without the Church's system, our objective nature will run to waste. There will be an exuberance here, which from want of due check and discipline will run to seed, while elsewhere from want of culture and cherishing it will not bear the fruit of which it is capable. On the other hand, the Church system

itself, without the impulses, feelings, yearnings of the nature she is formed to encrust and envelope, will become hollow, visionary, and shadowy; a body without a soul, a formal without a spiritual.

We have seen partial exemplifications of these abuses in the history of many religious movements; where on the one side, the inclination of the moral energy has been to throw off the restraints of the Church's formal, it has ended in a weak exuberance, the result of which has been schisms and positive sin, leading men *from* God rather than *to* Him, and wholly diverting the tide of feeling from its true and imagined object. While, on the other hand, there have been days wherein the Church's system has been worked, but unhappily, in fragmentary portions, so that from lack of love and zeal, the natures it was formed for have not been induced to swell it; and it has ended in presenting, for the time, the appearance of a repulsive form.

When once the system of the Church has been removed, the moral energy has thrown out a form for itself; it cannot exist without one; if its true shell is not applied it will encrust itself.

Hence the efforts at system in all forms and development of schism; they all become systematic. Nay! they all assume a sacramental character somewhere, and we shall find ever that in that proportion in which they are real, or have any true efficiency, they have borrowed a portion of the Church's system, or have created a bad substitute for it. Every

sect of dissent exists, in its outward *form*, under the guise of some fragment of the system of the Church, and its chief reality will be found to be there. Sects have been thus originated by the religious tendencies of men, compelled to create their own home, from the absence of a practical energy in working the Church's system in the days in which they grew up. Hence the fact of the strength and apparent reality of dissent, as well as that of the lower school within the Church, till lately. The Catholic system was not worked, and men have struck out their own; but it had no positive and real life; it existed in the negation of the true one; hence then again the gradual sinking into unreality and obscurity of the lower schools within the Church, and of schismatic bodies. In this day when the Church is again rousing herself to apply her formal to the wants of her children, dissent becomes political, and evangelicalism a shadow.

The Church has this double nature, this sacramental character throughout. Her substitutes have fallen into unconscious imitation; by them preaching has been made a sacrament, the experience meeting has been the sacramental substitute for confession; modes of expression and forms of words used by the initiated have been assayed in the sacramental nature of absolution; each deep thing of the Church has been badly copied. Her two sacraments, her external system, absolution, confession, orders, her form of building, her dress, her symbolism and holy types; her vessels and ceremonial,

her exact order and rigid exactness in minute details; her arrangement of the holy temple itself, whose symbol and ornament, storied windows, and rounded shafts, the hoary hue of ages on her walls and towers, all these bring out and shew her deeply sacramental nature, her outward forms encrusting and educing an inward being. By these she schools, disciplines, guides, makes use of our deep energies and tendencies; she applies them to their true object, she refines, she purifies, she strengthens our capacity for reverence in her ceremonial, our shame and yearning for sympathy in confession, our social desires in her perfect fulness of orders and works, our yearnings for greater devotion in her power of seclusion from worldly ties, our powers of association in her oft-returning prayers, and her round of sacred seasons. Her power to apply machinery is equal to the gradual development of her nature and wants, and though here and there she may be depressed in her working, the power is in her and is efficient.

It is this altar which has, of late, been broken down, and if her ministers would recal her children wandering in socialism, infidelity, schism, and ignorance, it must be by rebuilding this altar, and bringing fully to bear the Church's vast system on the hearts of the people; so and so only will the work of renovation be accomplished. The application of her system only will arrest the tide of moral desolation which is now sweeping all before it; she must ap socialism by offering intellectual and

social sympathy to the vast masses which have grown up around us in the last fifty years, intelligent, thinking, and only infidel, because the divine system did not at once meet and sympathize with their wants. She must exhaust the spirit of Wesleyanism by offering sympathy to the moral yearnings of her people.

We must all do this work in our parishes daily and hourly, with self-devotion and penitence, and the great weapon seems to be personal intercourse with our people. Men are on all sides yearning for that, and it is the substitution for that which has given such strength to her opponents. We must receive our people to that clear and systematic personal intercourse which is recognised in the exhortation in our Communion Service and that of the Visitation of the Sick. It is true the hints are faint, but it is our probation to work on without plain and open guidings. There is a reserve, overruled by God, in all our guidings, which seems to point us to penitence for the sins and neglect of the past which have caused it, and to more severe efforts at personal holiness and exercise of judgment and discretion. Enough for us, it is the order of our Church, however faintly her voice may sound; enough for us, it has been the practice of the Church in every age, in her purest and earliest day, in her more Catholic communions. This practice ever had its witness in each age of the Church among us; and he who was the light of each dark period, the warning voice of each age of laxity, worldliness, and

scepticism, has ever been at the same time the spiritual guide and the casuist of his generation. We may account for the absence in our Prayer-Book of a more direct and explicit statement with regard to its use, from the fact of there being no need to order what had been an immemorial custom, what seemed inseparably connected with the spiritual pastorship and guiding voice of the Church. We do not want new directions for what is in full existence and working, and as the practice of spiritual guidance has never been without its witness in each period in England since the Reformation, it would seem an over-niceness and needless scrupulosity to require more explicit direction for its use. The neglect and inactivity of a day of covetousness, the forgetfulness of the higher and holier ends of our life, the shackles of a blind prejudice, and a fear of probable abuses amounting to infatuation, have hindered and stopped its use. But in the catholic world, in the history of the Church, its absence is an exception, an omission. God ordered the scanty guidings of our formularies as our probation and our discipline, and to lead us to a more penitential mind.

At least we must use the custom. Men need to have their difficulties grappled with, their temptations known. There is an actual power in the mere fact of opening the mind, of telling the sin, which frets and weighs upon the soul. Guilt retained and unmentioned eats away the spiritual life, finds for itself a thousand shifts and subterfuges to evade the

conviction of sin. The conscience which is stained by it eludes the grasp, by its taking up new forms, all of which would be avoided by its being uttered. Many are in ignorance of what is sin and what not; they commit it without knowing it to be so, and though they are guilty of but a sin of ignorance, still it works with deadly effect upon them, corrupting, blinding, hardening, and because unconfessed, so unknown, and because unknown, working on the judgment. I would especially instance the sin of impurity, so frequently committed in perfect ignorance of its nature, and yet so peculiarly deadening and hardening in its effects. So despair, and in consequence recklessness, and unwillingness to exert any energy to resist temptation, is the result of the conviction that a particular temptation is peculiar to the individual, unknown to others, too dark to hope for relief; the knowledge which might be given, of its being common to men, would clear and chase away that cloud. The mere fact of questioning any one on his moral condition, gives him a clear and definite idea of what that moral condition is, of which till then he had a most indefinite and fleeting notion. The questions of the spiritual adviser compel search into self, the result of which is the answer which pressing with a keen edge on the soul, in the act of statement gives a consciousness of the existence of sin. One crying evil of our people is their gross ignorance. To instruct adults will generally be impossible; but spiritual intercourse will answer this end. It becomes an oppor-

tunity of no small power and force in impressing the facts of religion on the mind, by questioning, and making reference to the various articles of the Creed.

To attempt the working of this will require much time and labour, much close attention, much exercise of judgment, much study of human nature, and, above all, a high standard of holiness in self. But, my brethren, it is our work to repair the broken altar.

With care and assiduity it would be possible in a parish of one hundred communicants, to see each for one quarter of an hour between each communion, if monthly administered, and this could be done by seeing but three or four daily; it will be very singular how much punctuality, system, and self-devotion in this work may achieve, and give point to the act which will make up for the absence of more lengthened intercourse. Oft communion, daily prayer, as aids to the spiritual life, will follow necessarily on this. The work is great. Awful and tremendous is the account those have to give who have in this day received the holy calling. We have taken on ourselves we know not what. But whether we would have done it now or not, is not the question; we did it, though unwittingly. We have the awful hand upon us: a power is in us we dare not shrink from, and we cannot shake off. It has been our choice. You have received the holy calling, and from that time your every action, thought and word, will be tried and judged with reference to

that; those orders will give the whole tone and complexion to your judgment for eternity.

Patient labour, deep penitence, retreat from the circles of the world, is our way of meeting the tremendous day; to work continually in our sphere, to apply, as far as we can and may, the Church's system, to await God's time for a clearer and more tangible guidance, a more entire unity. But above all, by personal holiness our work must be done, our work must be more at home than abroad, more in our churches than in the cottage or the school. Our life, our race admits of no ease, no tranquillity, no relaxation. It is not merely the ruined altar in public that we must repair, the wilderness must be resorted to. Let us be real; consider the account we have to give; consider the depth of the scrutiny which will search the hearts of those to whom the Church and her people have been committed in that day. Picture to yourselves how severe the requirements will be of us for the souls He so loved as to die to save. Imagine the position of any one of us who have lived in security; have indulged in pleasure; have thought of self; have acted from self-interest; have thought of preferment; have shrunk from personal denial; have indulged in impurity in our calling; and thus have lost one soul; conceive this, and this will soon be to us a living reality.

Let us face the truth calmly and truly. Are we leading this life? are we in any way resisting His teaching or His chastisement? Let us not be satisfied with words; imagine the amount of sin which

has accumulated on the souls among us, who have merely adopted catholic views as an intellectual exercise, or as being attractive to the imagination, or as being opposed to a state of things we had been educated in, and holding them theoretically or speculatively.

Meanwhile, let us be patient; there may be a sin in resisting God's providence, when He has placed us in a certain sphere. The sphere is a penitential one, when it accords with our desires after repentance. When it involves a denial of high and tangible privileges, may we not be resisting His will in forcibly placing ourselves out of the providential line, and by seeking another place, and leave the more penitent and humble for the more plain and easy line. We have our sanction; we have our post; souls are hanging on us; time is short; our Lord is at hand; penitence is our aim; let us work on devotedly and calmly.

We have enough to do in the work of revival, and the forming in the wilderness the character with which we are to appear in the world, and in the building up in ourselves the pattern of the altar we are to raise for our people.

SERMON V.

THE SELF-DEVOTION OF THE MINISTRY

ARCHIPPUS.

Col. iv. 17.

"Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it."

There is an exceeding weight of responsibility, a deep awfulness, about the possession of holy orders, which, perhaps, very few calculated upon when they received them, which many shrink from realizing, but which will be fully discovered at that moment, which is fast approaching, when it will be beyond our power to rescue another soul, or to pray for another penitent.

Men shrink from this responsibility in many ways: some by ignoring it altogether, and dreaming through life, with the continual effort to forget the gift, which, nevertheless, burns within them for vent and application; others, by striking out paths consonant with their natural dispositions, making it their aim to leaven the mass of society, rather than to toil with individual consciences, or, in the pursuit of the refinements of literature and science,

striving to satisfy themselves that their high and holy vocation is fulfilled. True—severe personal discipline, the daily and hourly watch over words and actions, the anguish of self-conquest, the living in a sphere above the world's praise or blame, unwearying readiness to rescue souls, the effort to gain "a right judgment in all things," are, indeed, works painful to the flesh, irksome, passing expression, to the nature of us all. But the question is, holy brethren, and it is a question solemn beyond imagination to us who have received that gift, which of these two modes of fulfilling our ministry will best satisfy us when we stand before the "great white throne,"—the having diluted responsibilities by the effort to reduce our gift to the level of natural taste and personal ease; or, the having viewed its possession as a reason for the keenest severity of life? Shall we then be satisfied with aught short of the most entire personal self-devotion? or will He, who is coming "as a refiner's fire to purify the sons of Levi," take aught at our hands short of the highest self-sacrifice of which we are capable?

Holy orders are, as they ever have been, an awful possession. Every preconceived idea of our own would lead us to expect this; every word of Holy Scripture confirms that preconception. You may plead, under the vain hope of shunning responsibility, that in your case they were received against your will, or before you had had opportunity to count their cost or weigh their consequences. You may be impelled to exclaim, "Would that I were

again free! Would that I were as I was!"—*That* you can never be. You are separated to the ministry, a devoted and "peculiar people." And in that awful capacity you must pass the scrutiny of the judgment; you must listen to your final sentence; you must be tested by a standard in comparison of which the judgment of those who have never received your high commission will be infinitely light. At that bar you must stand, surrounded by souls for whom you are responsible, with the words of your solemn vow still echoing in your ear, maybe a few days, anyhow a few years hence.

Perhaps I speak plain truths, and tell an oft-told tale; but we all need it. We are, probably, none of us sufficiently alive to what will be expected of us; and already "the night is far spent, the day is at hand," and our probation will be over. In our case, most emphatically, "our life passeth away like a shadow." For us, holy brethren, those words have a significant intention; "the end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." "Neglect not the gift that is in thee; take heed to thyself and to the doctrine." And may God grant that these words, however plain, may, though even in the least degree, arouse him who speaks them and those whom he addresses, to weigh the cost of their position!

I spoke of the testimony of our moral sense as fully coinciding with that of Holy Scripture in raising its importance to an awful magnitude. Our work, at present, is with the latter of these, though

in passing, I might ask you to imagine what the inhabitant of an unfallen world, who might visit our sphere, would expect to find the life and conversation of the ambassadors of the Most High God to a ruined and guilty world? The incalculable loss of original innocence; the tremendous consequence of the fall; the love of God; His willingness to save to the utmost His lost and undeserving children: Himself manifest in the flesh; His marvellous Incarnation; His sojourn of suffering on earth, His painful crucifixion; His continued and unwearying calls to His people to return; the bliss of the redeemed; the despair of the lost; the wreck of sin; all would be considerations which would lead such a visitant to expect to find a life of, how exalted a self-sacrifice! in those whom He had commissioned to go forth as partners with Himself in the work of reconciliation.

But, as I said, our immediate object is, first, to trace from the letter of Scripture the responsibility of our ministry.

God's will, with regard to man, may be certainly gathered, amongst other notices, from what He has ever said or done with regard to persons in similar positions. And, beyond all controversy, co-extensive with the sojourn of His Church on earth, has been a ministry bearing the impress of His seal, on which has been written, in vivid and indelible characters, deep self-devotion, entire self-sacrifice, the counting all human ties and sympathies as nothing, the painful effort to gain a right judgment in all

things, and the bearing out in the life and act the doctrines taught by the mouth.

Samuel, devoted to his future vocation from his earliest childhood—separated from his home and the soft influences of a mother's love—educated amid the deep silence of the temple of the Lord—in manhood ever sent on missions of peril and hazard—while young accustomed to the awful visitations of the Most High in the midnight stillness of his chamber—himself counting his life valueless—scarce mentioned in connection with domestic ties, though we know he had them—stern and severe, with an eye singly fixed on Heaven, and the will of God,—gives us a solemn subject for reflection as to what God must esteem that ministry to be which required such a childhood, so stern a preparation. We have not had that training; but, nevertheless, He may expect us to study in Samuel's case the indications of His will, and may intend that we should make up for the absence of that education by a more elevated devotion in after-life. Surely, at least, with such an example before us, we dare not exhaust our sacred powers amid a more self-indulgent world than has ever paralyzed the energies of the Church since the day of Pentecost.

Or contemplate the life of the Prophet Elijah as the type of the minister of God. His abnegation of all bodily comfort—his little anxiety for the coming day, dependent on the food of the hour—his bold and reckless rebuke of those who, shining in the glory of earthly splendour and power, yet

might have coveted his favour—the rebuke with which his slightest expression of restlessness under a life so difficult was met,—paints to us in vivid portraiture a life in the minister of God, so far removed from personal ease, and elevated above any excused infirmity, as to make us tremble. Is this, indeed, the type of our ministry? And yet I know not why not. Are not our days evil too? Do not the men of our time need a severe example, an exalted standard? Is not ours all but a *special* call —a ministry cast in a peculiar hour? When visible unity is rent asunder—when "the altar of the Lord is broken down"—when there are scarce "seven thousand" in our Israel who do not "bow the knee" to some form of idol-worship or self-seeking? The crimes of our day may not be so manifest, our idolatry not so definite; still the men of our generation as much need the voice from the wilderness, and the living form of self-denial in the city.

Ezekiel's life reads to us a lesson of no ordinary import. The very ties of his life were created for the express purpose of being rent asunder, in order that he might shew to the people of God by his sufferings the meaning of his warnings; his afflictions became the interpreters of his words, his personal bereavements the parallel comment on his discourses. "In the morning his wife died." And he was forbid to weep. No rending of the heart's affections—no human suffering, however keen—no tearing up by the roots of family ties, however close,

were for one moment to enervate the vigour and force of his living example. The expression of sorrow would have melted away the severe outline of that perfect form of resignation which he was to exhibit. No! by life and by death the minister of God is commissioned to be a type to His people of self-devotion and single-mindedness. Surely, holy brethren, the prophet of the captivity speaks, in words of no light import to us, of the necessity of our living for our people, and shewing, by patient sufferings and denials, the truth, the reality, the application, of what we daily read and hourly teach!

And so it was with all the prophets,—whether shewn by the sorrows and banishments of Jeremiah, the fastings and conflicts of Daniel, or the severe chastisements of Jonah for flinching from the work of his vocation; it is but one lesson that is taught along the history of that Church, which is a type and shadow of the Christian. And remember, if, in any respect, the requirements of that dispensation differ from those of our own, it is that *they* are the shadows of a form, copies of an original, outlines of an inward being; ours is the higher, the more exalted condition.

Or, if you will—pass on the New Testament. He who stood midway between the two dispensations offers us no lighter rule for the life of God's minister. His severe childhood, his stern preparation, his wild fare, his utter seclusion, his solitary death,—all thrill through us, and we pass on, say-

ing, his was a special call—his case was no type of ours. But where will you rest your feet? The Apostles forsook all. Christ was their life, the pillowless desert their resting-place. His lot of reproach was theirs too.

The awful end of Judas; his judicial condition, the consequence of vast opportunities outweighed by the indulgence of sinful desire; his bitter, unrepenting remorse; his death; his going "to his own place;"—all, though so shortly told, announce to us, with a voice at which we shudder, the severity of God towards him who, with holy orders resting on his head, shall dare to indulge in worldly thoughts or covetous desires.

But to pass onwards still. St. Paul does not lower in his Epistles the standard we have hitherto discovered. "In all things approving yourselves the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses; in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings: by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left; by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Here is no lower standard

raised. The Epistles do not elevate less highly the standard of the Ministry.

Pass on to the earlier days of the Church's history. The same high requirements, the same severe devotion, is found as the stream of time runs on; the waters do not become sweeter, nor more in accordance with our natural taste: they are still the same. In the cavern, at the stake, beneath the axe or the instrument of torture; through cruel aspersion, and dark, false witness; amid severance from human ties and bodily ease; the minister of Christ learnt that his ministry is a type of theirs, and that those who are called to holy orders are called to suffering too. And surely even the most casual reader of the fathers of the Church, from St. Clement to St. Bernard, must be struck with the awfully literal interpretations which they applied to every word of our Blessed Lord's teaching, which had any reference to self-abnegation and a spirit of mourning. The sandy desert, the hermit's cell, the cloister, became by degrees the outward limits to that life which was struck out by those who took holy words as they found them. We, now-a-days, are in the habit of denouncing that as fanciful in which they saw the most intense reality. The two modes of interpretation are antagonistic to each other. The question is, which has on its face the probability of truth,—the consentient witness of the first eleven hundred years, or the mode adopted by an age whose every effort is to soften down high requirements and to be rid of restraint?

Holy brethren, such is not our ministry,—such is not our life. Secularized, contaminated with the world's spirit, we have sweetened the bitter waters with streams not drawn from the well of life. In point of unity, severed and divided; yielding to sectarianism and religious party; lulled by the soft blandishments of society in all phases of religious opinion; seeking the praise and favour of the rich and noble, whether catholic-minded or the contrary, as the case may be: we are, too many of us, diluted, enervated, compromised, by the world we too much live in, and the fashion of the day we too much yield to.

Oh let us stop one moment and consider, He is at hand, and He will "purify the sons of Levi." He will deal with us as with none others; He will expect of us what He will expect of no one else. You may say, Why so high a requirement? Why so severe a scrutiny for us above others? Think—perhaps the place hereafter of His minister may be far above that of those who have no such outward calling; and shall the exalted thrones of eternity be won by scarce forty years, at longest, of a grudged and resisted denial?

But it might be well to consider some of our immediate duties, and what may be some of our faults. Among the failures to which the minister of God may be tempted, I would suggest, first, distinct worldliness of mind. Seeking the society of the great, being flattered by the attentions of the noble, and courting the favour of the rich, are

as distinctly the tendency, and more than tendency, of many of those whose expressed creed involves the highest standard of self-abnegation, as it was of men of a baser standard and a lower profession. The love of the good word of the great is not kept out by the shield of a catholic tone of mind—the world catches its victims under all guises and forms; and the court of the religious noble is as much the snare of the world as the gayer scenes of more open vice. Take care of the world, in whatever school or shade of religious opinion. And remember, the world is not only confined to the great. The approving eye of our brethren, the love of singularity, the adoption of opinions for the sake of notoriety, or of giving vent to a peculiar bent and talent, as much are parts of the fascination of the world as the favouring eye of aristocracy and royalty. Oh, guard yourselves, holy brethren, against this snare. What will He say when He comes, if He shall find us neglecting the souls of perishing millions, who know nothing of his Name and of His atonement, while we are spending hour after hour amid the flatteries of the great, or in eliciting admiration for peculiarities, eccentricities, and originality of conception?

Another tendency of the clergy is to a hollow æstheticism. Beautiful and too long forgotten has been the Church's ceremonial; pregnant with deep and hallowed meanings, and conveying life through the ministration of outward forms, no doubt are all her external rites,—the symbolism of her architec-

ture, the purity of her vestments, and the severity of her music; still they are but a chrysalis, in which the immortal soul is preparing to spread its wings into eternal day. We must not spend our time there. We have a higher work, a holier vocation far—to rescue souls for whom Jesus was incarnate; to guide to Him men who scarcely know that He died and lives again; to comfort the penitent; to heal the broken-hearted; to sympathize with the unhappy; in one word, to bring souls to Christ is our great work,—all else is, in comparison, nothing. Our most perfect churches, our most symbolized architecture, our most elaborate choirs, our purest and most heavenly music, without an intense effort to save souls, are but as a sepulchre which was framed to hold Christ; but "Behold, He is not here: why seek ye the living among the dead?" While those churches are filled with really earnest souls, while that music becomes the wing which bears up the cry of the penitent or the peaceful hymn of the redeemed, while those symbols speak of faith and holiness to a thirsting spirit, they are the sepulchres in which Christ retires from the world with His elect—tombs enshrining God: but the moment they contain no burning heart within them, no enquiring penitents, no earnest souls, then, at the door of your church, at the threshold of your choir, the angel of God will meet you with stern rebuke—"Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here." No! go first and seek souls, then raise your church and perfect your cere-

monial; but, till then, they are empty sepulchres without Christ, because without the souls of His poor. Reverse the order, and begin with the hearts of your people; then let your church be beautiful, because so many grateful hearts are burning for an adequate place wherein to return God thanks for His redeeming love; then let your music be beautiful, because so many voices are waiting for a chant in which they may blend to ascend to the throne of the Lamb. Let the services of your holy hours, the ministrations of your holy seasons, be struck out by the inward need of longing souls, which impels them and requires them; then they will become bodies to quickened spirits, tombs of blessed ones waiting in this lower earth for their happy home, sepulchres of Christ, wherein His redeemed abide with Him in still retirement; but without this, ceremonial is the worst of mockery, æstheticism the most empty of unrealities. Holy brethren, bring souls to Christ by solemn warning, by inducing them to unburden to you their secret anguish, by spiritual guidance, by earnest entreaty, by untiring watchfulness, by consistent example; then you will "fulfil the work of your ministry." I do not say this to depreciate æstheticism in itself, still less in forgetfulness for one moment of the awful presence which ever abides within holy walls, but surely is there not in this day a tendency to neglect the work of the soul, while we are engrossed in arranging its external furniture? We would not build houses for corpses, nor lay out gardens for

withered leaves. You know it is a fact that, in this land, souls in thousands are perishing for lack of knowledge; that in the crowded alleys and the dark garrets of our mighty cities, in the densely-crowded rooms of our gigantic factories, in many a retired village and secluded shore, there are people who bear the name of Christ, who lie in a darkness more dense than that of the heathen who know not God.

Another fault amongst us seems to be, a tendency to seek bodily and personal ease, aided by the view that society is to be leavened, rather than that the individual is to be guided. Some think that the minister of God is in his truest position when he simply influences by his example, to the exclusion of the stern, untiring work of individual and personal ministration; that we are to be sought for before we seek, and to be invited before we invite: all these opinions, I say, tend to favour that love of ease and dread of exertion so many are yielding to. The fear of having daily service, lest we be tied,—the alarm at beginning close, systematic work, lest we become too closely rivetted to the sphere of our vocation, are retarding in many cases the energy and devotion of the ministry. We may not argue thus; our whole life is Christ's: "we are not our own, we are bought with a price." By us, life is to be unvalued, death unheeded, ease and health of no consideration, so as only we can glorify Him, and bring to His judgment-seat souls committed to our keeping.

Another fault amongst us is want of unity. We

split into parties, we have a tendency to partizanship, while we profess to denounce sectarianism. We are too much sometimes inclined to support a faction whose distinctive existence depends on some doubtful formula of truth, and to sacrifice reality and sincerity. We do not enough value and cooperate with earnestness. We shrink more from fellowship with one who differs in an outward, and perhaps uncertain mode of statement, than we do from sympathy with those who, while they accord with us in such expression, are deficient in love. The cant of religious phraseology, the exclusiveness of arbitrary boundary-lines, limitations that lack authority, are as much the habit of one party in the Church as they are of the other. Men of catholic mind, alike with those who have not been educated to appreciate catholicity, tend towards this infirmity! Surely to the peacemaker has been assigned a high position amongst the eight beatitudes. *Our* spirit should be rather that of love than intolerance. Our eyes should be keener to detect the love of God in the heart, than a flaw in the outward expression. If we love Christ above all things, and desire to be "hid in Him," we should oftener find common ground with each other than we do. Love of self generates love of party; for the opinions and the success of our party reflect, as from a mirror, ourselves. We are bound in this day to remember, that there are causes for the non-appreciation of catholic doctrine and ecclesiastical discipline which should make us tolerant. The sup-

pression of the Church's authoritative voice in the younger days of those whose hairs are now grey in the love and service of God, may enough account for the error of their objective creed,—they would have valued, if they had had, our opportunities. We cannot, we dare not, judge them by the same rigid standard with which they would have been judged, in a day when the slightest deviation from obedience to the Church's spirit was more palpably a sin. To the true servant of Christ there must be a greater attraction in one who "hungers and thirsts after righteousness," although somewhat mistaken through ignorance, than there is in one who, while true to an external system, is deficient in love. Of course there are occasions where the extension of such tolerance would be a sin; but the check that *we* require seems to be in the other direction.

Another fault amongst us is, an over-distance in manner and feeling observed towards our flock. Our object should be to offer sympathy, to excite confidence, to induce free communication, to banish restraint. Acquaintance with the hearts of our people and close union with their affections, though even if it be so at the expense of some of the external dignity of our order, is our aim; love is better than deference, confidence a higher attainment than expressed respect: though, rely on it, none of these results will be lost, but rather enhanced, by the adoption of a less restrained intercourse.

Again, we are not systematic. Every subject-matter in life is made the object of systematic arrangement and scientific rule, while the highest of all subject-matters, the soul and conscience of man, which are committed to our ministration, are left to a management which would be despised by the meanest sciolist in the world's phenomena. And yet what requires so laborious an investigation, so delicate a touch, so anxious a vigilance, as the formation of the saint? It is an awful thought, holy brethren, that in the parishes committed to our trust are many baptized saints whom He has committed to our care, and ours alone, to prepare for their place around His throne.

The private and public life of the parish priest, the regulation of his family, the economy of his arrangements, the moderation of his living, the systematic nature of his ministrations, will form a considerable part of "the fulfilment of his ministry," while the absence of these will impair its effect and much injure its powers. On the former of these heads, the clergyman's private life, we might dwell at length. But in brief, inasmuch as it is one of the points in which there is too much tendency amongst us to deviate from the high line of self-devotion, I will say a word. It must strike any unprejudiced mind, that there is a wide and appalling difference between the arrangements of time adopted by the clergy and that fallen into by every profession and trade of English society. In the latter, we find men of talent, earnestness, per-

severance, and influence, so ardently employed in the pursuit of professional distinction or the acquisition of wealth, that health is sacrificed without compunction, society given up, the rules of domestic life without hesitation suspended, the arrangements of the household, the habits of life formed by each of its members, wholly framed so as best to attain the object in view. Who blames the physician who attends the summons of his patient throughout the usually festive hours of the evening, or those devoted to repose at night? Who expects to find the barrister in the full pursuit of his professional career at the usual gatherings of evening social life? His absence is expected, his devotion admired, his energy held up as an example. What in the history of society is more punctilious and exact than the rule of military discipline? Where is the soldier who does not forego every call of the world for the far higher ones of his professional life? To a late hour, in city and in village, the lights burn which betoken the persevering labour of the workman, who, to amass a little heap of gold, is calmly and patiently sapping the foundations of life and health. But, alas! turn away from these to that (so-called) profession whose object is the salvation of immortal souls, the glorifying a redeeming God—whose ranks are called out to fight with legions of ever-active spirits—and what do we find their position in society? Expected, as a matter of course, because they are tied by no positive obligation, to form one of every

party gathered for an evening's amusement—blamed, as fastidious and enthusiastic, if they plead their ministerial calls as excuses for their absence—looked upon as the only class of men in society who are able to pay and return the common visits of daily courtesy—society seems to think that the clergyman's day of duty ends with the close of afternoon, and that his highest vocation is to be the example of respectability and domestic comfort to his neighbourhood. Holy brethren, what a fearful contrast is here! On the one side, where the object, at the highest, is the praise of man, ambition, wealth—men are devoting every thing. On the other, where the objects are the salvation of souls for whom Christ left heaven, eternal happiness, and the rescuing immortal beings from never-ending agony, *we* are sacrificing next to nothing, when we compare the average of ministerial devotion with that of the professional world. The impression society has received of the easiness of our life has been given by ourselves. It tests us by a standard we have raised. Have *we* no work in the evening? Are there not cases of spiritual want, as pressing on our attention as those of temporal malady are on the physician? Shall he hear midnight strike in the pursuit of his vocation, and we consider ours fulfilled at six o'clock? Can we afford to be often dining out? Are there no masses of society in our parishes, who can only be reached after the hours of return from labour, and who, if we do not meet them then, are never grappled with at all?

Among the tens of thousands that thread the evening streets of London, Manchester, or Birmingham, are there no souls who are perishing for lack of knowledge, and whose eternal destiny is mysteriously bound up with him to whose spiritual charge they are given? Can we be "fulfilling our ministry," while the lights gleam till midnight from the theatre, the gin-palace, and the gambling-house, and our churches alone are dark, and ourselves threading the mazes of easy society? Can this be right? "Shall we stand when He appeareth?" I simply and earnestly ask you, will He bear to find, that "the children of this world" have been, indeed, "wiser than the children of light?"—that we have allowed every earthly object to be pursued with an energy greater than what we are using for ours? Remember that He expects tenfold more of us than of any of His creatures. To us has been given His high commission, and He is One who will reckon with us "to the utmost farthing." I see no available excuse; you may plead the fashion of society, the opinion of the world; but you have formed the one and yielded to the other. No. Our work is not finished when the common routine of visiting schools, attending vestries, sitting at committees, and fulfilling an afternoon service, are over. The guiding and pleading with souls are works which *never* cease till time shall be no more. We are to be untiring as He was untiring—crucified as He was crucified—patient as He was patient—earnest as He was earnest. We must reduce our

life to system, within the limits of which the hours and calls of the world *cannot* be included. We are, proverbially, the least systematic of active men, and yet our immense responsibility requires us to be most so.

You may say to all this, how high and severe are the calls of our life—how beyond human strength—how appalling to contemplate! All most true: but, in the words of St. Paul, when speaking of that same ministry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" with all our responsibility, we have the *special* grace of God, the *special* presence of Christ; and while the need of our devotion is so imperative, remember it is, at the longest, for not more than some forty years longer for the youngest of us—not a quarter of that for many of us—and then our denials and painful sacrifice will pass away into a state of eternal rest; and while our requirements are so much greater than those of others, our reward in heaven will be so much higher. "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, we shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away:" that is enough for us. Blessed shall have been this day, and this occasion, if it shall have kindled in the hearts of any one of us the determination "to fulfil our ministry" with a greater devotion. May the drops, by God's blessed help, gathered up for *our* nourishment here, to strengthen our personal energies, return as a refreshing dew on the soil from which we drew them!

SERMON VI.

PURITY OF LIFE.

St. Matt. v. 8.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

The return of St. Bartholomew's day suggests its own holy lessons, and many of them are peculiarly and significantly suited to the young. The anniversary of holy days and seasons is full of power to the soul of him who is waiting for the kingdom of God, and the same lesson repeated yearly will not be found fruitless to the spirit which pants for heaven. For such, "the saying the same things is not grievous." We live surrounded by the same temptations, the same world, the same infirmities, one year with another. The temper of each man's soul is much the same at one period as at another, it differs but in the increased or lessened intensity of temptation and desire; the same disposition evolves for itself similar difficulties, similar external circumstances, similar remedies; and the return of holy days, with their warning voice, finds us much where it left us, travelling much the same path: though, God grant, somewhat further in ad-

vance towards the heavenly goal. Such days are the mile-stones of our spiritual journey, and they mark our onward progress with fast decreasing numbers; each year we are solemnly reminded that our periods are rapidly decreasing before as they swell behind. We shall soon be at the last; and ere long the mile-stone of our journey will tell us of but one period more between ourselves and the end. They are the timepieces of life; and each hour strikes somewhat nearer midnight, telling us in thrilling tones that we are approaching the last stroke: "the night cometh when no man can work." I know that on the ear of thousands these holy seasons die away without a passing effect: I know that to many the solemn clock of life strikes on the heedless ear of moral death. Let it not be so with us; we know we have a work to do; may we not rest till it is completed!

St. Bartholomew's day speaks each year a lesson to the young. The guilelessness of the Israelite indeed; his simplicity of mind, his earnest and trusting love, his freedom from second motives, his singular singleness of purpose, suggests to us those lessons of purity and innocence so especially belonging to the young.

Of the holy Apostle himself we are told but little; his character is suggestive, rather than his life instructive; yet the few words said are full of force. He is otherwise called Nathanael, and was sitting under the fig-tree when St. Philip called him: no doubt a disciple of St. John the Baptist, and one

who studied the prophecies concerning Christ, he was simply waiting for the Messiah.

"Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nararcth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God: Thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Such is all we hear of him whose lesson we would learn particularly to-day, and who from the commendation of our Blessed Lord has become the example of guilelessness to His Church.

Each holy day has its own lesson, and each saint whom the Church commemorates speaks to some class of character among us. The Church's year is a great picture gallery, along which is hung up in perfect order, the saintly portraiture; each may

find his model there. There is no lack of those whose natural lineaments are ours. The Church's holy seasons are mirrors which reflect over and over again the history of human character. St. Peter speaks to the warm-hearted and impetuous, and offers a word of consolation to the penitent; St. John speaks to the reserved and sterner character; the man of business and worldly occupation finds his lesson in St. Matthew at the receipt of custom; the young and bold in the early suffering of the first martyr; and the man of learning, and gifted with intellectual powers, in the detail and acts of the life of St. Paul. Each circumstance and intention of life, each shade of character, has its own difficulties, its own temptations, its own doubts, and its own remedies; and Holy Scripture is the record of God's will concerning the direction of man in the way to heaven. In this light, if this were all, saints' days are full of power, and their lessons rife with importance.

With this view let us dwell on the guileless character of St. Bartholomew. The idea suggested by guilelessness is that of singleness of mind, oneness of end and purpose; having one object in view, the service of God without distraction; the having no other aim, no other point in existence, the "being knit to God." Such seems to be purity of mind when applied to religion, and such the character suggested by St. Bartholomew. Now to define more exactly the meaning of this temper we may approach it by its contraries, and they seem chiefly

to be these two, sensuality and love of men's opinion; these are specially the enemies of purity of intention, and more than any other divide the affections and aim of the heart; there is something in them peculiarly hostile to the love of God. The "sight of God" is the reward of the pure; the praise of men is mentioned as a direct hindrance to the praise of God. "Fornicators and unclean persons," are mentioned always first among those who cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven, and "the friend of the world" is emphatically styled "the enemy of God." Hence, then, the peculiar lessons of St. Bartholomew's day for the young; to them the temptation to impurity and vanity is the tissue-thread of life; to them purity and guilelessness of heart, as embodying the contradictory of these two, are specially difficult of attainment; to many among them, to aim at a life of purity is the most arduous of accomplishments.

1. Now before I enter on the minuter examination of the duty so specially suggested to you today, I would first remind you of its high commendation and reward. "Behold an Israelite indeed," said our Blessed Lord, "in whom is no guile;" high and glorious witness: who of you would not count as of priceless value in the dreadful day such testimony borne by Him to your life and boyhood!

Its exceeding value is shewn by our Saviour, in the reward annexed to it among the beatitudes. There "the seeing God" is its result. The sight of God is of all things the most glorious, the most

transcendant that man can desire; it is that which kings and prophets desired and had not; it is that which was the great point in the life of Abraham, the vision of God, and the conversation with Him: the sight of God cheered Jacob in his solitary exile; it was this that entranced Ezekiel and became the one feature of his life, his writings, his after character; it was his turning-point of life. The vision of God on the river Chebar was that which absorbed Daniel, and became the image of life to the man who was "greatly beloved;" to see God was the enjoyment of Adam in his innocency, and the aim of the human race when fallen. St. Paul's point of life was the vision of the third heaven, and St. Philip yearned with intense desire to see the Father; "shew us the Father and it sufficeth us!"

In our early childhood the most glorious thoughts which religion gave the mind was the hope of the sight of God, and the loss of the simplicity of childhood is, among other reasons, chiefly a sorrow because with it we have lost those vivid visions we seemed to have of God and heaven. And even now there are seasons of unaccountable peace, of confidence, and indifference about life; of holy joy in moments when the soul does seem to realize a present God in a manner which only can be fully expressed by the significant words, "seeing God." Sometimes in sore trial and bereavement, when the world is valueless; sometimes in hours of solitude and meditation; sometimes in the passing scenes of daily life there are foretastes of that felicity which

is promised to the pure in heart; the sight of the Eternal. Such is the high reward of purity; and if such be the blessing which He Himself has emphatically annexed to it, how earnestly we should strive after it!

2. The lesson is one as I have said peculiarly for the young; for it is at your age that the temptations to the sin of impurity are greatest, the struggle against it most painful, and the victory when gained most glorious.

It seems plain from Holy Scripture that one mystery connected with our moral and spiritual state, is that there are certain periods, certain acts, and opportunities, which become the turning points of our probation, the crisis of our moral state, the hinge on which life and death hang. If these golden moments are lost, they cannot be recovered; in God's great mercy there may be more than one, nay, there may be many appointed to each one of us in our onward career. But no words can describe, no thought calculate, the value of each of them for ever. It is nothing that they are but a moment and their consequence eternal; it is nothing that in actual importance they are but a feather's weight compared with their result. The disproportion between the cause and the event may be vast, as between a drop of dew and the waters that girdle the earth; still so it is: the act of an hour may be the hinge of eternity; the resistance for a moment may be the gate to heaven, the yielding of ten minutes may be the seal of everlasting despair.

Why it is, is not for us to know; it is hidden in His inscrutable ways, whose acts transcend our ken as the thought of the human brow surpasses the understanding of the fly which moves across it. Enough—it is His will who with equal mystery loved us while yet sinners, and offered up His life on the cross. The fact of eternity in any way resting on time, and heaven on our probation, is equally marvellous and amazing. The crisis of life may hang on one act, it may on more; there are certain periods when it specially occurs, and the age of fifteen, usually that of first Communion and Confirmation, is perhaps of all others the most important. The reasons are manifold, but I would first illustrate the fact from Holy Scripture. You will find there that in the case of nearly each one of God's most eminent saints, the turning-point of life was some event which took place either about the age I mention, or, circumstances being considered, analogous to it; up to that point their life was unmarked and without distinct feature, at that age some event occurred which became the test, on which the whole of their after character seemed to hinge, and from it to receive its tone and colour.

I will illustrate this in Isaac: as a boy his character is unmarked, and if any notice is made of him, it rather tends to create an impression of faults than aught else; his dispute with Ishmael and kindred infirmities bring to the mind the idea of human weakness more than that of saintliness of character. But God was intending him for the noble army of

His saints, and the crisis of his life was to be in his youth. That crisis was the projected sacrifice; he was led by his father to be offered as a sacrifice to the Lord; he bore it patiently, obediently, uncomplainingly; he became in act as in manner the type of Him who afterwards bore the wood to His sacrifice. That trial, that patient bearing, that act of his life, became his turning-point, his crisis; from that moment Isaac became a marked and a saintly character. The trial came in youth; for then the mind is formed; the disposition receives its tendency and confirmation, the will receives its bent. It was the critical period of life, and that sacrifice the critical act. From that moment his life became a settled one; that his faith survived the test convinced him of his position with regard to God; his act reacted on himself; his obedience was rewarded with the power to obey, and discipline aided the life of discipline. He had made his choice, he had taken his position, and the passions, the feelings, the opening knowledge and powers of youth, were at once coiled round the iron bar of a sanctified will for ever turned to God. But his moment of decision was in that age which, in comparison of his case with yours, bears relation to your present life, the passage from childhood into youth, from early into later boyhood.

3. The same was emphatically true of Joseph, the youngest and favourite child of Jacob; he became the object of envy, and when yet a youth was taken from his father's home, to be an exile in a foreign

land. But how wonderfully God was preparing a saint for glory; when the young Jewish boy, a bound captive on the camel of the merchants, gazed for the last time on his home among the hills of Judæa, he little knew that what seemed but the dark cloud which had floated across the sunshine of his youth, was in reality the veil behind which his character was beginning to be formed, confirmed, and strengthened.

He was to prepare to be the saint of God in an eminent degree, and that preparation must be made by the trials of boyhood. In Egypt he was exposed to the keenest and most perilous of youthful temptations, and he resisted; that temptation was to impurity, it met him at that age when the character was receiving its mould, and as he met and treated those trials and temptations, would be the form his soul would receive for ever; it was his crisis of life, and on his conduct, in and through it, hung the long future, the pilgrimage of earth, and the triumph of eternity. A few months, a few days, aye! the temptation of an hour, may have decided everlastingly the position of Joseph in God's great kingdom. A hand held the balance in which he was placed, which he did not see; the slightest inclination on either side was to affect his soul throughout countless ages; and the son of Jacob, by the decision of half an hour, determined whether he should be unknown in God's kingdom, or whether he should be the type of Christ, the saint of God, and a pillar and example of the Church of the elder world. Who can

say how some severe temptation may have equally momentously decided the destiny of some of those before me! Who can tell how God may have ordered that the passing through a scene, short compared with eternity, as a drop to the ocean, may have decided, or may yet decide, your position in the judgment of the great day!

David is another instance of the same kind; designed and chosen to be the saint of God "before the foundation of the world," he was early to begin his severe probation: and the first thing we read of him is, that he was called forth to a position of peril and trial at that very period of life I have been speaking of. He went down from the wilderness and the village of Bethlehem to see his brother in the battle, and his act became the crisis of his life. He met the giant of Gath, and trusting to the everlasting Arm, he slew him. It was an act of faith and dependence, an act of heroism and courage above manhood; it needed a reliance on grace in no small measure: and that act was the hinge of his life; from that time forward he became a marked and disciplined saint, beset with difficulties which it had prepared him for, and surrounded with temptations. But he had no hesitation as to his course; that action had determined it for ever; and to his own eye as well as that of the world, his position had become defined and clear.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people

of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."

In the same way, many of the most eminent saints have been specially tried at the same period of life, and Holy Scripture has recorded their acts as if to remind us of the importance attached to the temptations of youth. Samuel and St. John the Baptist are spoken of with reference to some decision then made, some severity then endured.

The lesson to you is clear: unobserved by the world, the acts and temptations of your path may be invested with an importance which angels witness, and which the judgment will alone wholly unravel. Rife with an unseen value, full of holy consequence which is commensurate with eternity, the severe temptation of a few days may be, and very likely is, the hinge of your life. I do not say that if you do not succeed in subduing it now you will have no future opportunities; thank God, of His infinite mercy, He grants many; but the present may be your last, and at least, if not so, the fact of yielding now will make more difficult, more painful, less sure of success, your future conflicts.

Your present age too is full of opportunities; it is the age when temptations of the most withering kind are fresh, and tempt you in a way in which they never will again; an age when, by the opening out of your character and sympathies, you are peculiarly liable to feel desires and aim at objects,

which are alien from the love of God; when the new world into which expanding character brings you, is full of perils and difficulties of every description.

And more than this; you have peculiar opportunities of good, and of resistance of evil: yours is first Communion; yours is Confirmation. While on the one hand you have peculiar temptations in the opening out of the heart; the burst of passionate feelings hitherto unknown and untried; the first knowledge of life, with its interests and distractions; to you is offered a grace in first Communion, well-nigh equal to a second Baptism, and a power in Confirmation which arms you as a soldier for the conflict with sin and Satan; with you God is specially present, and His Hand near to help. It is to you a crisis and a turning-point of life, both for the probation you are called to, and the aids which are offered you.

I mentioned the sins of impurity and vanity as those specially belonging to your present age, and about which St. Bartholomew's day suggests many holy lessons. I will dwell especially on the former of those two sins.

1. I need hardly linger to remind you how common and terrible a temptation this is, and how severely it presses on the soul at the time of life which you have reached. When I speak of a sinful sensation which perhaps haunts you by night and day; strikes across your paths at Holy Communion and hours of devotion; casts a shadow as of a

hideous being on your soul at those moments when you were delighting in the pure, clear sunshine of religious intention; fascinates your will with objects so enervating as to dim for the instant the glories of the city whose streets "are pearl and gold," and which has power to pale the terrors of the fire of hell; so alluring as to wile us away from the very voice of the Good Shepherd when we are most willing to follow Him; a temptation which is importunate to be attended to, so as to leave us scarcely time to recover its repeated shocks; withering as the blast of a poisonous wind; heading us at every corner, and meeting us at the end of each path down which we have tried to escape, like a spectre dogging the heels of a murderer: when I suggest all this I shall best delineate the features of a state of mind common to many who are striving to overcome the temptation to impurity.

It is a temptation so terrible, that there are many who find it weighing like a burning iron on their soul, and are unable to obtain a moment's alleviation: and yet two may move together through life, companions and friends, each weighed down by the same load, and that to the hour of death, without daring to reveal the awful secret to one another. It is a temptation which is the cause of many a knit brow and deeply-heaved sigh; many a sudden change in the eye and conversation; still the load lies there beyond the ken of the dearest companions, while its victim is feeling that one word of sympathy, one half hour's confession, would be like the

wind of winter let in to a furnace, or snow water on the parched lips of a fever. We realize the deepest indignation against ourselves, but the next moment we are willing to forego the dignity of man, and yield to the awful solicitation. We trample it under foot at night, disgusted and weary of its vile importunity, and in the morning we find it at our waking pillow, active, fresh, and energetic.

2. Its exceeding sinfulness is manifest alike from Scripture and from experience. The sins of impure sensations are marked first amid the catalogues of crime referred to in the Bible, and have a prominence given them, which at once shews them to be of tremendous moment in the sight of God.

The passages from Holy Scripture are plain: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies." "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." "For

without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

In all these passages a terrible and significant precedence is given to sins of impurity, as if they were the keystones of the structure of sin, the threshold at which all vice enters, and the certain signs of the dominion of Satan.

Very remarkable, too, are the examples given in Holy Scripture of the effect of sins of this nature. The first terrible vengeance after the flood fell on a city polluted by crimes of this kind. Blindness and death were the portion assigned by God. The sons of Eli, the types of unholy youth, were remarkable for the worst form of this sin; sudden and unprepared death was their penalty. The tales of Shechem and Hamor, Absalom, Judah, and Onan, are scattered here and there throughout Holy Scripture, to mark God's continued vengeance against this kind of sin in any of its forms. David's life was weakened, and his vigour enervated to his dying hour, by one sinful act of impurity. Solomon sank within its toils, and the wise words of the wisest of men are full of caution against the snare of the "woman who flattereth with her tongue." Holy Scripture, by precept and example alike, warns us of the existence and effects of this temptation; nor is it hard to see its moral consequences. The great enemy of God is the world, and the creature viewed in relation to the world. This sin binds us to the creature, and consequently draws us from

God. It attaches us to life, and exactly in the proportion in which it does this, it gradually severs us from God, until at length the detachment becomes final.

3. Its effect on the whole moral constitution is withering; it sweeps like that wind of the desert, of which we read, across the soul, and though it was as the garden of Eden before it, behind is left a desolate wilderness; it scorches the spiritual life of the soul, and dries up the opening buds of holiness and earnestness. Another of its effects is the destruction of self-respect, and the deepest and most dejected shame; a consequence attached to it by the law of nature. Under it the character at once sinks; the motive for high and elevated action is lost; the moral ear, which had listened to the call of good, becomes deaf, and the moral being willing to take up a station beneath his vocation; he feels degraded, and with that feeling loses the desire to rise. He is insensible to his calling, or to any thing which would remind him of it. Self-respect is the handmaid to the desire to excel; and exertion depends on having a regard for our own position and estimation; this once lost, there is nothing to hinder the depression of the moral agent to a level with the beasts that perish.

Another mark of this temptation, when yielded to, is its fascinating influence. It wiles us on, delighted with its pursuit, and our cries of conscience are lulled by a sweeter than syren's voice. It weaves a chain of silk around us, which gradually

becomes strong as brass, and yet so soft are its coils that till we are bound hand and foot we have not discovered we are slaves. It is as a fair and beautiful form which allures us with smiles and tenderness, and not till we are bound to it face to face, have we discovered that we are virtually chained to the hideous and rotten features of a corpse. Every act and every indulged feeling of this temptation only increases the difficulty, and makes return more and more impossible; we entered by a winding path, and each step we advance the winding path becomes behind us an inextricable labyrinth.

But its self-deceit is among its most fearful qualities and properties. We may even imagine we are serving God, while in fact we are drifting further and further from Him. Its power to evoke high and refined feelings; its tendency to create self-devotion to the object of lust; the general glow of poetry and affection which it sheds over the mind; the way in which it is associated with the pleasures of music, and poetry, and song, and even finds a sympathy in the beauties of external nature; its capability of heroic self-devotion, and self-sacrifice, towards its miserable object; all are reasons for its being at once the most deceptive and delusive of the sins to which we are prone.

But I will not say more on this head. I have but hinted here at some of its tendencies; so tremendous are they that their description would be nearly endless: enough in summing up these hints, to say, that the sin is deadly, and we want no other

word to express all that is ruinous in time, and fatal in eternity.

4. With regard to the mode of its attack. There are certain periods when perhaps you will be specially assailed with it: your waking hour in the morning, your solitary hours of study, and wanderings in prayer and divine service. You will often, then, be induced to think that you are indulging an intercourse and friendship for the best and highest reasons, and not have discovered till far gone that sensual motive has lurked in your heart. The sinful desire will continually take you unawares, and when most off your guard. The communion of friends, the hours of kindly intercourse, the intimacy of social life, are no preservatives or warrant for its non-intrusion, no reasons for your being off your guard, or laying aside your vigilance. With these remarks on the time and manner of its approach, I will proceed to rules for its management.

1. The first rule I would suggest to you is a manifest and well-nigh a trite one; but in a matter like this its force and truth are transcendent;—prayer for grace must be your continual work and safeguard. It is true in all cases, that grace alone can make us conquerors; but we know the truth so well that we scarcely attach reality to its intention: it has become to us a phrase, a rhythm: it loses its force and point because it is familiar to us: but try and make it real; in fact, the least experience in attempting to overcome this temptation will prove its vast power. You may try resolutions, feelings,

determinations, and convictions founded on reason; you may lean on rules of conduct and bodily mortification to the last degree; all will fail without the grace of God; that is all-powerful, all-mighty; it is the only power which can outweigh our own vile tendencies and desires, the only antidote to the poison of sin. You can do nothing without grace, you can do anything with it; with it you may cast out legion, without it you cannot move one fleeting shadow which passes over your soul. Then the first rule is prayer, and that "instant." I should strongly advise stated prayer, morning, noon, and evening, and that with some distinct reference to the sin you are tempted to. The morning has its peculiar temptation, which needs its own grace, and the afternoon comes with its difficulties when the effect of the morning's strength is worn out; we need a renovated grace "for the pestilence that walketh in darkness," as well as for "the sickness which destroyeth at noon day." The evening, too, has its own temptations; we may not expect to lean on the grace received at one time to carry us through another period. It is no slight on that blessed gift to say it needs renewing, any more than it was to the manna to gather it daily, or to ask for "daily bread" in the holy prayer.

2. The second rule I would lay down is this; by all means, and on all occasions, avoid dwelling on the object of impure sensation; we are told by holy men of old, that on this point alone we may be cowards; we must fly from it. The mere dwelling

on its forbidden pollutions, even to combat them, forms evil habits, and withers holiness. Like the fabled head of mythology, its gaze is enough to petrify. If we fix our mind's eye on it with the best intention, it becomes like the eye of the rattlesnake on the bird, which gazing at first with intended attack, ends with the fixed glare producing inaction, and finally death. We are often led to bring the object of sinful desires before us, and that with the best intentions, when we pray against it, when we would examine ourselves on it, when we are regretting the past, when we unfold our grief to another, when we compare ourselves with ourselves. But on all these occasions as far as possible shun the image; do not let the coloured lights fall into a shape or outline, nor suffer, if you can help it, your vision to centre them in a focus; if they are dimmed, leave them so, and do not restore the view; repress even the slightest image, lest it should strengthen and invigorate evil desire; you are too weak to bear it. If you have to pray against it, to examine yourself on it, let the object be an imperfect memory, a recollection of something past, rather than of the object itself; mean it without expressing it, intend without defining it. Let no excuse avail to dwell on it.

3. The third rule I would suggest is, with reference to the mention of your mind's grief to one capable of advising you. It must be done with caution, the mere mention is fraught with danger. There are few you would go to who would not un-

derstand your meaning, and spare your utterance; but by all means open your grief; it is a law of nature, a law of Scripture, a law of the Church, and the law of our own experience. Holy Scripture bids us "confess our sins one to another;" and the Church tells us to come "to the minister and open our grief." It is the impulse of our own nature; the temptation pent up burns like a coal chafing itself by its own inherent heat. The mention of our grief is like opening the door of our heart, through which a refreshing breeze flows in, chills the heat, and restores life to our dry spirit.

By opening our mind we find others have borne and conquered the same temptations; that we are not the only ones; that we have not a temptation we "are not able to bear;" that we are passing through an ordeal appointed by God: we learn that our condition is not so bad as perhaps we thought it; we discover that acts and sensations which we had thought were deadly, and the memory of which was depressing our whole moral being and destroying our self-respect, our trust, our elevation of nature, leading us to despair, were really less culpable than we thought them; what we take for substantial forms were but shadows which passed over our soul, obscuring the sunlight of heaven for the season, but leaving no impression. Satan is wonderfully disarmed by our opening our grief. He loves to get us into a dark corner, and then to terrify us by our very loneliness, and his awful companionship. He dreads the introduction of a third party, and he

knows the spiritual adviser comes to let in rays of light on the darkness of despair. Do not fail to open your grief.

4. A fourth rule I would give is, when you are alone, and sinful thoughts arise, do not stop to reason with, or contemplate them; as I said before, flight is justifiable. In this sin cowardice is true courage, and flight perfect heroism. At the first approach, forget it if you can; if you cannot, if it importunes you, if it presses on your notice, fly to prayer, or say holy words, the Creed, or passages of Holy Scripture; or take a book up and read; engage and amuse the mind and the imagination, pre-occupy it; or, if need be, go out and enter into conversation with another; that will be a lawful mode of resistance. Do any thing but meet a form whose presence awakes your regret. The fact is, that we cannot be too sudden and precipitate in our flight.

5. Again, avoid idleness; Satan will have no vacuum, and if we do not fill it he will; our unemployed minds and hours will soon be filled by him; if we leave our mind open and blank, he will people the empty space with figures of his own. Employ your time and your energies; nothing so soon occupies an unemployed imagination, or an idle hour, as impurity, it pours like a torrent into an empty channel.

6. Especially attend to the government of your thoughts; they are the soul's horses, which bear it away as a chariot to the gates of hell, or the

threshold of heaven. If we are not in the habit of placing a rein on them, they will soon be beyond our power. Learn to command them, learn to govern them, or they will be your ruin. When alone, or when awake at night, or when at work, get into the habit of fixing them for a period, however short, on some definite subject, some holy or inspiring contemplation; the coming judgment, your hour of death, hell or heaven; do not let them wander from these points till the period you had determined to dwell on them has elapsed; let that be for two minutes, or for five, but be determined; having won your object, let them have their range, and again bring them back to a definite point; do not let the period which you devote be too long, or you may fail. A small intention without failures will be better far than great efforts imperfectly executed; do not let your thoughts hover on fanciful subjects; check their exuberance, and be severe on them; by this means you will bring them under control, and cut off one great occasion of impurity and kindred sins.

7. In cases of strong temptations of this kind bodily mortification is a remedy; it tends to convince us of our sin; it reduces the physical causes of the temptation; it weakens the powers which are otherwise active in promoting it; it brings about a holy and a humbled spirit, which conduces to the mind we desire; it tends to decrease our love for the creature by reducing the creature's power to love. You will find it of great effect; you will not

regret the experiment; the knowledge of its efficacy hangs on the word of Scripture, the advice of antiquity, the experience of tens of thousands. But it must be used with caution; when the heart does not go with it, it will be but the new wine in the old bottle; it will do more harm than good. The observance of seasons already appointed, will in ordinary cases avail; such as the weekly day of sorrow, and the appointed seasons of Lent, and other times of humiliation. Under strong temptations we might safely add special acts of abstinence for ourselves; although perhaps in such cases it may be better that these also should be under advice.

8. Avoid the first beginnings and approaches of sin. This sin is peculiarly encroaching; it wins its way unseen and unheard like a stream along grass; it moves with scarce a murmur; and is hidden in its soft progress, until we find at length it has become an onward and a mighty river. We must avoid the slightest connection on any excuse with that object which we have once made up our minds is suggestive of evil desires; we may not linger near it; we may not fondly gaze after it. Satan will often propose this to us; he will say that 'to break off all connection with some person, will do more harm to them than good to us; that we have no right to sacrifice the feelings of others to our own benefit; that we may continue to influence for good, though we check evil in ourselves.' But the influence of those who have once created in us sinful desires, seldom is altogether counteracted in the

highest saint, and the most disciplined character. We must shun the least connection with sinful objects; the touch, the look, the half-hour's conversation, may excite evil in us, may undo the work of years, and turn signal victories into a signal defeat. We cannot be too careful; a hundred excuses will rise up and appear reasons for not adopting this line; our sinful heart will plead at the bar of conscience, and its pleadings will receive too ready an attention; it will plead that such estrangement implies moral weakness, is a sign of cowardice, will excite an impression of unkindness, unnecessary coldness on our part; will not advance religion, will raise further opposition to spirituality of life than already exists; that the world will not understand us; that we ourselves shall learn cowardice by being cowards, and shall form the habit of shrinking, by shrinking ourselves; that we ought boldly to face the foe, and that the highest character is formed amid the keenest temptations: all very true up to a certain point, had we strength enough to bear it; but most of us have not, few of us would do as much good as we should receive harm; we must carefully shun the approach of sensual objects; we must love to feel we can exercise reserve towards them; we must suspect every plea put forward in their favour.

9. Again, never lightly pass over a sin of this kind which you may have fallen into. Mortify yourself for every committed act; and do not be satisfied without leaving a mark and trace of chas-

tisement behind. There are many ways of doing this; you can find other remedies besides abstinence from food to chasten yourself for committed acts of sin.

10. Be cautious, and on your guard against any innocent amusements, which nevertheless tend to excite sinful feeling however little intended. Music and poetry will do this, and need their check and guidance into right and proper channels.

11. But I would also say a word by way of encouragement. There is danger in sins of this nature of our conscience becoming morbid, and a certain degree of despair arising, which will paralyze and cripple our spiritual energies; never despair. If you have been so sorely tempted that you feel you have over and over again been on the very confines of this sin; if you feel its breath is left on you, and you have been led in thought to indulge it, while the bent of your general will was against it, and each act was followed by repentance; be satisfied, do not despair: God will judge the general bent of your will. Remember, while you are anxious and earnest to be free, and are using every means in your power, you are safe. If you have slightly fallen, begin again; never be weary in making new beginnings; with many the whole Christian life is one series of new beginnings in holiness; never despair, for at best we are poor, and weak, and miserable, and God knows it. "He knoweth our frame, He remembereth we are but dust." You will often have need of this rule; you will frequently be dis-

tressed with inward anguish; you will in the most successful struggle feel polluted, and the hour even of victory will at its end appear a polluted hour; but it will be counted as an hour of strife and conquest; though the field be bloody, it will be the field of success. Remember temptation is not sin unless yielded to; it no more affects the soul than the shadow of a watcher by sunset stains the marble pillar near which he stands; unless your will open to receive the sin into yourself, you are not guilty. Some men's temptations are intensely vivid; but the utmost depth of shadow makes no impression, nor does the most keen temptation of necessity create sin.

12. Do not be discouraged at finding but little marked advance in your spiritual condition as concerns purity; at your age there will be often but slow apparent advance; temptation will increase in importunity with age; you will not be free yet; and the increase of desire will often give an impression of retrograde movement, while in fact you are struggling successfully in His Eye. Nor be alarmed at what seems the absence of simplicity of mind on this point; advancing age, knowledge of sin, intercourse with life, must to a certain degree destroy simplicity; you can never be again quite as a little child.

Having given these rules, I would offer a few suggestions by way of motive, which may stir you up to purity.

a. Consider the multitudes who have fought your

fight, and are now safe for ever, and free from temptation. There are boys in Paradise now, who have won the victory which you long for. You are not treading an unbeaten and untried path; their conflict was like yours, and if they have come off conquerors there is no reason that you should not; there is no difficulty, no anguish, no severity, which you are called upon to use, but they have borne it before you, and in your strife you are but the rear-guard of a vast army of holy youths, who, through denial and many prayers, ridicule and reproach, good report and ill-report, discouragement and darkness, have fought the battle and won the crown, and are for ever at rest. There is something noble and great in feeling that we belong to a host of warriors and conquerors. There is something soul-inspiring in marching behind banners marked with victories, and which are old in a war as ancient as the world. We can record the victories, and read the names of many, and the glorious catalogue raises our spirit, and cheers on our drooping courage. The van of the army we march in was filled with men whose names are great in the heraldry of the earth, and treasured in the records of the everlasting Catholic Church; they have struggled in the first ranks, and gained the mastery; they have won the victory, and have crossed the threshold, and are at the land they longed for; and we but follow on to be where they are gone. They look on us as brothers, and we may regard them as the same. And who does not know the soul-inspiring

influence of being recognised as partners and companions of the noble, the brave, and the true! Foremost in that host is the first martyr, who won his victory amid the stones; and blazoned on the banners which they bore, are marked the high and heroic acts of youth's devotion to God. Joseph's purity, Isaac's patient meekness, and David's youthful heroism;—who would not fight in such a host! who would rank with the vile, the profligate, and the mean, when such may be their companionship, and such the army of their enlistment!

b. And this reminds me of another motive, the difficulties of your strife. It may seem strange to offer this as a motive of encouragement. But why should I not? what is the history of boyhood in all ages but the pride of surmounting difficulties, and the heroism of imitating manliness; the glory of courage, the shame of cowardice; and the exception in boyhood is meanness, or shrinking from difficulty. Every undertaking of greatness has been marked with the heroism of boyhood, and the bold daring of heroic youth; then why should not the difficulties of the heavenly race be a reason for striving? why should its hardships be otherwise than a whet to their energy, or a reason for increased exertion? If for an earthly honour, and the praise of a human commander, no difficulty is too great; if at the first call of national want, thousands of youths emulate each other for the first post of peril and alarm; if in the most terrible scenes of warfare and death, boys have been found to face

the front of battle, because none others possessed the heroism to brave the imminent destruction; is it too much to take for granted, that for a higher than any national call, the call of God,—for nobler than any earthly reward, the crown of immortality,—a higher than animal courage, the decision of the will for the side of truth and holiness,—boyhood will furnish its noblest candidates? Why should it be that in many of our great schools we find a hardihood, a shrinking from softness, a self-denying braving of danger and pain, which elevate the soul; and yet scarce in proportion of one to a thousand, a youth who is willing to bear one cross, and strive through one conflict, for Christ and his own salvation? With this view I will not fear to place forward as a motive for the strife of purity, its exceeding difficulty, and need of daily denial.

c. A third motive for purity I would suggest, is the perfect peace it produces in this life. It may seem strange that the sufferings of intense desires should be causes of peace and happiness; but so it is: it is a matter beyond the province of reasoning. This peace is a principle inherent in us, a law of our moral being, a matter of experience. There is a consciousness of integrity, a high self-respect, a conviction of God's favour, an heroic triumph over self, a confident trust in the future, a lull of tormenting desires in the conquest over lust, which are indeed peace.

There is an unsatisfactoriness in a life of indulgence of these desires. Strikingly forcible are

the verses in Holy Scripture which infer this; the life of yielding is empty. In seeking and pursuing the object of lust we are delighted and fascinated with the chase; but it is trite to say we pursue a rainbow, it fleets before our grasp, it is pictured as further and further off still, and after we have wearied ourselves in a vain pursuit, the dark chill cloud comes over the coloured phantom, and we find that we have lost all and gained nothing. This unsatisfactoriness of the indulgence of passions is a truth discovered by every enlightened heathen, witnessed to by daily experience, and asserted from one end to another of Holy Scripture. We are so formed that we do not gain the goal of satisfaction and peace by indulgence but by discipline. If in the pursuit of our lust we do gratify it by a cowardly and sinful yielding, the result is a distressing sensation of disappointment, a feeling that there is something beyond, which we have not after all attained, a gratification gained far from commensurate with the desire; while the result often is a ruined health, a shamed face, and, above all, the sacrifice of a peaceful conscience at the shrine of what all nature has proclaimed degrading.

d. There is one other motive I will advert to in passing; not that it is of inferior weight, but so great that though it should have its own separate consideration I cannot pass it by unnoticed:—I mean the crown which lies in the power of many of you; forfeited alas! for ever by most; the crown of innocence; the never having given up the re-

ligious life. There are degrees and various estates in heaven; there are approaches to the throne of the Lamb of greater and less distance; there are grades even among the redeemed; and the highest of all positions seems assigned to those who have preserved their baptismal purity; they stand nearest God, they gaze more intently on the beatific vision; they strike the first notes of the song of the Lamb; they are more deeply absorbed in the ocean of glory; they lead the everlasting choir, and theirs is the key-note of the harmony of heaven. That place is in your power; to many, how many! of those who have wandered further on the path of life, is it forfeited past recovery! The dark fornication; the blasphemy wilfully indulged in the face of knowledge clear as a sunbeam; deadly sins fearfully yielded to in days now gone, though all repented of and forgiven, have lost for many that place. God knows how bitter and scalding the tear with which they lament their bartered birthright; but it may not be recovered; thank God, as penitents they have their place, and glory be to Him beyond expression, that that place will be one of perfect peace. Some of you may have what they have lost—wonderful and blessed thought! and can you renounce it? will you give up the highest place for ever for the gratification and softness of a few fleeting days? A little while will close all; even now for some of you the sun may be going down, and the evening shade be slanting over the horizon. Time is short, eternity is long.

I mean by baptismal purity, the having served God faithfully, continuously, earnestly, however imperfectly and poorly, from baptism onwards. I mean the never having given up the effort at the religious life, the never having thrown the rein on the neck of lust, and never having given up the stern, earnest, persevering effort to restrain sin, and to sorrow for it when committed. I mean the never, from childhood up, having given up prayer and longing after holiness and heaven; the never having gone with the tide of the world's streams; he that has done that has retained his baptismal purity. I do not mean the never having sinned, nor the having gone one day without falling; it is indeed true "there is none good, no not one." I do not mean the freedom from severe temptations.

There are mighty rivers which belt the countries of the earth with their onward waters; as they roll in calm and silent majesty on to the ocean which is their home, they sweep past cities and mountains, plains and fertile valleys, and they do not rest till they enter the vast waters that girdle the earth. No obstacle stops their courses; if a boat sail against the tide, or a rock be hurled into the midst of its current, it would check for a moment but not turn their direction; presently they will flow on as ever, calmly and silently to their bourne. Such a river is as the soul, setting out from the font of baptism to wend its way through earth's scenes and temptations, to its object and its portion, God. The infirmities, the temptations, the yieldings of a

day, may divert its current for a few moments, but that is all; the soul that retains its baptismal purity goes onward calmly as ever, and rests not until it has found what it sought, the bosom of God. As distinct as is the effect of that momentary obstacle from the actually diverted tide, will be the sin of the pure heart from the state of him whose heart is severed from Christ by wilful perseverance in sin.

Remember you are entering on a terrible and deadly conflict. I would not hide that from your view; I would not spread flowers over your path to conceal its thorns; no wound has been given to religion deeper and sorer, than the investing it with poetical feelings: it is a stern deadly strife. The life you will have to live is a severe one; temptation will be constant, persevering, harassing; when you think it past it will return; at the hour of death you will not be free; you will often be without the comfort of religion when you have had to yield the dearest object of sensual delight, and the strife will assume a cold, dull, leaden aspect, without light or devotion; you will have to be vigilant to irksomeness, and often be inclined to say, Where is my reward? the knit brow, the sudden shade of sorrow, the deep sigh, the passing sadness, will often mark to a close observer how severe the inward anguish is. I tell you plainly and boldly, because I should be dishonouring you if I thought that telling would discourage you; there is no rest for the Christian warrior till the last breath has re-

leased his spirit to Paradise; then there will be the fulness of joy for evermore!

Purity of mind is the holiness of boyhood; it is a pearl of great price, sought after through many a weary voyage, and found hidden in the deep recesses of the sea of life. So high and holy it is that heathens have praised it, and men who knew not Christ have caught glimmerings of its beauty. Homer saw it, and Euripides has sung of it; it was the consolation of Hippolytus before his doom to say,

> *Λέχους γὰρ ἐς τόδ' ἡμέρας ἁγνὸν δέμας.*
> *οὐκ οἶδα πρᾶξιν τήνδε, πλὴν λόγῳ κλύων,*
> *γραφῇ τε λεύσσων· οὐδὲ ταῦτα γὰρ σκοπεῖν*
> *πρόθυμός εἰμι, παρθένον ψυχὴν ἔχων.*

Christian boys, soldiers of the Christian army, for whom thrones are prepared above, and whose place in eternity was provided before the foundation of the world; you who are temples of the Spirit and the members of an incarnate God; do not pass by a crown as much more glorious than those of earthly heroism as eternity transcends time; a crown which prophets and kings, sages and patriarchs, heathens and Christians, have alike joined to celebrate, and which already is suspended over your brow by angels, who wait to see whether through the crisis of boyhood, through the onward career of manhood, and to the hour of death, you "will keep yourselves pure!"

NOTE.

I WILL add some hints which appeared in the first edition of the Parochial Work on the sin of unchastity and temptations to it, as they appear more appropriately placed in a volume of Sermons, especially addressed *ad Clerum*. It must be remembered, however, that the remarks here are simply intended as hints, and not as perfect and minute detail of spiritual guidance on the point.

With respect to general reflections on the management of this sin, I would make the following remarks, which, though applicable to many other temptations, still have a peculiar suitability to this.

1. There is nothing more important than the avoiding temptation, and yet few things harder; a man may often make up his mind to give up the actual committal of the sin itself, and determine to make a bold stand to overcome it, and still will be unwilling to tear himself away from the object, scene, and occasions, which suggest the sinful desire. There is a compensation for giving up the actual sin in the indulgence of the sensation occasioned by the presence of the object itself. And

this will induce us to place ourselves continually in the way of such occasions, though there be no intention of yielding. In such cases the wrench required to tear ourselves away from the object of temptation will be greater than even that required to give up the full commission of the sin. This is but the device of Satan; for when once a man has pitched his tent within sight of the enemies' camp, he by that means exposes himself to attacks from the foe, and often at the greatest disadvantage to himself.

2. Another remark I would make has reference to the nature of the will. It is wonderful how easily we are deceived by the nature and operations of our own will, and how easily we can think that the will is coincident with God and holiness when really it is not; for instance, a man strongly tempted, will in a moment of deep sorrow for the past determine to shun the temptation for the future. He imagines he has determined this, and that his will goes entirely with his resolution, and thus often satisfies himself for the moment, while in fact he has reserved to himself a portion of his sinful will, and has not fully determined to renounce self for God. The slightest weakness and infirmity in the previous resolution will be enough to break down the whole moral strength when the hour of trial comes, although he had at the time fully satisfied himself that his resolution was formed. Sometimes the man himself will at the time when the struggle commences, only half make up his

mind which way he will act, and fascinated by the intense desire, he will say to himself he will not commit the sin, and yet not fully commit his will at once to the determination, but leave the question slightly open, and this with a latent and unrecognised intention to yield at the moment if the temptation be alluring enough to make it difficult to resist. Satan suggests many instances apparently plausible for doing this; either that it is as well to meet temptation more boldly, and that it is an absence of moral and religious courage to prepare so long beforehand the determination of the inner man, or that there is no need to fix such minute attention on the sin.

The only safe way will be the entire and complete decision of the will anterior to the coming of temptation, and then alone will there be any sure warrant of the temptation being met firmly. The slightest hesitation, the least supineness of purpose, will be enough to cripple the moral intention in the moment of battle.

3. Another remark I would make, commonplace though it may sound, is on the high importance of watchfulness and continued vigilance. It is often the habit of men to use their vigilance only for a short time together; thus beginning the day with close and careful watchfulness, and dropping it as soon as the day is half past, and thereby losing the past labour and the future reward. There is in most men's lives a certain portion of each day when they are more exposed to temptation and difficulty

than at another; whether it be in the labour of noon and afternoon, or the society of evening; there is also in each man's day some portion when by quietness, retirement, and religious habit, there is more than usual opportunity for self-reflection, vigilance, and prayer. It is no unfrequent habit to spend a season of earnestness and watchfulness, and then to go forth as if strengthened with armour for the conflict, and to lay aside all future effort through the day to improve and keep up the defence: the consequence of this very often is a bitter failure before night; the same habit of vigilance must be carried into the work of the day as had preceded it, and the constant use of prayer as a weapon of defence is needed virtually or formally at every hour. The same will be true of watchfulness at special seasons, like holy Communion, or at times of illness or death. It is too common to find men throw great weight of vigilance into these seasons, and to drop it in the intervals, which with very many is really the crisis of the spiritual disorder. I would be far from making light of the immense importance of laying in strength at the beginning of the day for the work of the coming hours, and for the temptations which are sure to arise, nor do I mean that the grace gained at such seasons will not go far towards the moral strength of the soul in her after difficulties: but we must not rest satisfied with this, we must never lay aside our arms, and perseverance in vigilance is as important a part of spiritual warfare as vigilance at all.

We shall generally find that the sin of impurity is the leading one we have to struggle with in persons from fourteen to twenty-five. It is the burden of most confidential communications on the state of the conscience; it is the sin which is most generally meant when men speak of strong temptation, or sigh over past days of sinful infirmity; it is the sin which has most probably left its stain on the soul early in life, and from the withering effects of which the spiritual character has never wholly recovered.

It is little known or thought at how young an age this deadly poison begins its work, and how little in many cases even the safeguards of marriage and maturer years are of avail to stop its progress. It is little imagined how commonly deviations from the common path of this vice are met with by the spiritual guide, how really frequent are the tendencies to that class of crime which from its supposed infrequency has gained the name of unnatural crime. Thousands pass each other yearly in the circle of society in each of whose hearts the fire of this one sin is burning, who yet never have communicated to another their inward yearning, and thousands pass to their grave, and lie side by side, without having given expression to one of those devouring thoughts which have been to each the familiar companion of the solitary hours of life.

The age when this sin becomes a temptation is generally a turning-point in life; many a child retains in full force his baptismal grace and innocence, is continually sensible of high and holy desires after

God and holiness, is regular in devotions, truthful and obedient, until he is wrecked on this sin as on a rock at the age of fourteen or fifteen. No temptation so turns the tide of life; its fascinating allurements, its being able to exist with much of benevolence, tenderness, disinterestedness, and even an apparent humility; and the fact of its generally being stronger in characters which already are tinged by a more than common glow of feeling and affection, all are reasons for making it one of the most self-deceiving and dangerous of temptations.

It makes its first, earliest appearance at the time when the character is developing, and all the powers of the mind are receiving a point and strength which tend to give nourishment and vigour to this sin, as food, taken in certain conditions of the body, tends to feed an existing disease, while its object is general support.

The power of appreciating the objects of nature, of realizing the kindlier and deeper feelings of our relationships, the recognising one's-self as a moral and social being, one of a great community possessed of powers of giving and receiving advantage, all begin to open out at that age when the soul becomes, by means of the body, the object of these temptations. And the fact of the inducement to this sin being so much mixed up with the mutual dependance of human beings on each other, makes the tendency to it greater, in proportion to the amount in which consciousness of that dependance deepens at the opening out of life. A child is not conscious in

any high degree of dependance, relationship, or reciprocity of action; it is dependant and it depends on relationship, but is unconscious of its principle of action or intention. It is no longer so with the growing youth; he becomes aware of a pleasure in the recognition of the fact that he is dependant on others and others on him; and we are so formed that this very connection between ourselves and our fellow has a tendency to impure sensation. The excess of that dependance is impurity; so delicately and critically are we poised in our moral constitution, that that which in its mean use is the highest relative virtue, will cross the boundary almost without our knowing it, and become the worst of all sins against our neighbour.

Besides which, with the opening out of the character comes an appreciation for the beauties of the natural world; for music, for poetry, for countless other objects which call out the sensuous nature of man, and which, though in their mean use they tend to God, they feed the sensual appetite the moment we have past that transient boundary line between right and wrong; and their own nature being sensuistic, they readily give vigour to temptations of the kind we have described.

There is another remarkable fact connected with the dominance of this sin over the character. Its nature is so connected with deep affections, refinement, high-wrought sensitiveness, things in themselves beautiful and good, as to make those who are under its influence imagine that they are

rather preserving good and beautiful traits and tendencies in themselves, than what is actually wrong. It seems to be able to consist with certain strong religious feelings, and the power of self-deceit is so great that there have been frequently cases of persons imagining they were leading religious lives while habitually living in fornication or even adultery. This sin does not destroy the sense of God's presence, or a certain reverence for His existence; sins of swearing, lying, and intemperance, seem more manifestly to militate against our recognition of God; a man indulging this sin can imagine he believes in God, and has a certain reverence for Him. It is so subtle, so soothing, so mellowed by the light shed on it from many tenderer feelings, that it does not appear so to violate or jar against the natural feelings of reverence for God as open blasphemy or deliberate deceit do. While they interweave themselves with the web of our relations to God, and from their coarse and unpolished texture plainly mar the whole, this sin seems able to run in parallel lines with our observance of God, and not to interfere with or confuse it.

We thus discover the extreme deceitfulness of this sin. There is no other sin whose approach is so insidious, and whose whole appearance is so plausible, as this; there is a greater power in it to weave a web of self-deception round the heart than in any other sin. The two features referred to above will of course partly account for this; its affinity to objects in nature which are in themselves innocent,

and the possibility which, however strangely, this sin seems to admit of being connected with a certain reverence for God.

There are many feelings in connection with this temptation which become counterfeits of religious impressions; the highly-wrought refinement, the conscious affection, the willingness to renounce our own pleasure and apparent interest to justify those of the object of our lust; the high and heroic self-abnegation the feeling is capable of producing, inferior only to that inspired by true religion; the disgust men feel after they have indulged and gratified their sinful desires, which they mistake for feelings of true and sincere penitence; the somewhat more refined and sublimated nature of this desire, when compared with the more gross sensual temptations; its very expulsive nature, by which it ejects from the soul the dominion or even the presence of any other passion or sinful feeling, thereby lessening to a considerable degree the range of sinful objects which meet our mind's eye in a cursory review of our condition; all these are reasons for impurity being a sin which exceeds all others in tangling a web of self-deceit around our soul, and luring us unconsciously to ruin. Any sin will in proportion to its intensity have the power to expel others, and by this means alone will become the more dangerous and deceptive; and when, as in this case, the sin is one which is allied with feelings otherwise good and innocent, the peril becomes immeasurably increased.

It so attaches its victim to objects belonging to earth, that a disrelish is gained for heavenly things; the ideas of happiness consisting in purity and holiness become painful and insipid: and, consequently, the motive of attaining eternal glory becomes gradually removed. The end of this must be a general perplexity of conscience, a confusion of all the principles of moral action, and at length a complete deadening of the moral sense altogether. The general depression of the character must ensue.

The dominance of this sin in the heart will produce a great fickleness and changeableness in the conduct and character, which will vary and oscillate, as it may be under some strong allurement to the favourite sin, or suffering from an intense disgust at it. Towards the object of the sinful desire this will especially be the case; so that at one time the feeling which will be expressed will be as extravagant as at others it will be deficient. This fickleness will be equally shewn in the conduct generally; so that the general deceitfulness of this sin will be increased very considerably from this very cause, there being a constant reaction in favour of the feeling which contradicts the one at the moment possessing the heart.

Generally this sin will produce a perfect depression of the animal spirits. A deep sadness will often hang on the brow, and a shade of melancholy cast its veil over the whole character. An absence of manner will continually testify the fact that the soul is absorbed in some other object, compared with which

the concerns of the moment, the natural interests of life, the things which have usually most interested and engaged the attention, will be trifling and insipid. This melancholy and abstraction will sometimes become so deep as to take the form of insanity; and the victim of it will lose the peace of life, and fully realize the fact that he is "a slave of sin;" he will long to be free to enjoy what he cannot enjoy, and to take delight in high and innocent delights he once relished. No one will at times more than he realize the depth of the prayer, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He will be able to appreciate and long for, while he cannot make himself love and choose, those innocent pleasures which have lost their charm to him by the expulsive power of another passion. He remembers those past joys as things of a day gone by, and feels as if he should never be able to realize them again. To his mind they will involve a strange contradiction; they will have lost their charm and attraction; they will appear insipid; still they will be to his eye and memory beautiful and far higher than the pleasures he is pursuing, as much purer as the brilliance of a summer's morning exceeds in beauty the dark red glare of a furnace.

At times he will catch at those purer objects; in the intervals of his passion, when some object has disgusted him which he had been pursuing with avidity; and having again caught them for a passing moment, will feel they have a reality to which

the sickly and intense delight yielded by his hitherto pursuit is as nothing. But the shadow of his old temptation will cross his soul like a spectre of a hideous dream, and fascinated, maddened by its attraction, his tendency will be to pursue it instantly, and to leave his lately-adopted joys to wither where he planted them.

All this is the cause of continual waywardness, absence of mind, abstraction, fickleness, and melancholy, which will increase until the struggle between conscience and sin has reached its culminating point, and then gradually, though rapidly, all these marks of the deep, hidden, secret, unknown agency, will pass away as passion takes her unchecked seat in the throne of the soul, and for the future guides the reins of government, which are yielded to her without resistance. The strife is ceasing as the shadows of night close in fast around the moral agent, and as he becomes less and less conscious of the calls of holiness, the joys of heaven, or the service of sin. He is fast entering the night when no man can work; and the marks of his agony have passed away, either because he has become quite hardened and reckless, or because the fearful voice of self-deceit is raising the cry of "peace, peace, where there is no peace."

This sin will produce an effect on the character of frivolity of manner and want of gravity. The victim of the temptation will often appear without the common seriousness which serious occasions demand; and that from no actual loss of serious-

ness, or deep reflection and feeling, but from a dread of thinking about, or dwelling on, those deeper realities, which would so condemn the course he is pursuing. He dare not think. He dare not look grave or feel grave, or it would paint to him in colours painfully vivid his real state. His conscience is quite dead, and the boundary line between right and wrong faded quite away, and he cannot bear that. This feeling will lead him to shrink from grave manners, discourses, or reflections, and to imagine that the real reason which withholds him, is a dread of irreverence, or a natural and right reserve.

This sin will be generally found to possess all the features above described in characters which have a tendency towards effeminacy and softness. The more stern and manly character, when under its influence, will less shew them.

When this sin has gained its entire mastery over the soul, and the cry of conscience is so smothered that it can no longer protest against it, the character will take different lines according to the disposition of the subject of the temptation. In severe and more manly persons, whose perceptions and feelings are less keen, it will take the form of hardened and thoughtless recklessness; while in the softer style of character we shall find that its effect will be to produce a general mawkishness and sentimentality of feeling, which, from certain points of counterfeit, the wretched victim imagines to be religious sensation, whereas it is but certain powers

and tendencies, which religion has a peculiar power to influence, but which are in his case under the guidance and sway of his impure desires.

No religious adviser can efficiently fulfil his hard task, without having first thoroughly weighed and examined the nature of the sin itself, of which he purposes to aid in the subjugation. Sins are very different in their nature, their source and origin; and dependant on that to a very great degree is the method to be used in treating them. Of course in its nature sin is in most cases the excessive use of some capacity for a good and right object. The sin of anger is the excessive or false use of a power and tendency placed in us for self-protection, and selfishness is the excess of the necessary provisions of self-love. So intemperance and sensuality are manifestly the extreme pursuit of objects necessary to our daily support and existence.

The clock of our moral nature was a machine, all whose works, before the fall, were in good order, and the spring which set each and all in motion, directed them to their proper object, God. Our clock, as it were, struck in perfect harmony the will of God. The fall injured the spring of the whole, the human will; and from that time each work still existing, undestroyed, has worked to a false end; and by being turned towards an object improper to itself has become itself weakened and

impaired: but there it is. Hereafter a new principle of action is needed, and that is the grace of God; and true religion consists in the degree in which we allow each part of our moral constitution to act under His guidance, and be turned again to its proper and original use.

It is to be remembered that the suffering any one of these tendencies to work out to excess its own end, is to make them distinct ministers to sin. Excess becomes sin; so that not only does true religion consist in the due use of existing powers and tendencies, but in their original intention being carried out. And this is one part of our moral probation, and a most difficult part of it, that the very power and tendency which is the heart of the right service of God, becomes in itself sinful when allowed to pass over the boundary line between moderation and excess.

Impurity peculiarly touches on that very province which God has claimed as His own, the love of man bestowed on another. The effect of this is manifest: from ceasing to love God as the chief object of love, we proceed to forget our relation to Him, till from the mere fact of feeling there is one who is claiming all our devotion, which we are unwilling to yield, we proceed from absence of love to actual hatred.

With respect to its manner of approach and growth.

Its first sensations will depend very much on

external circumstances, character, natural constitution, and other causes, which will develope more or less early the physical tendency to this sin. In southern and eastern climates it will of course make its assaults at an earlier age, and with a violence which the more sluggish character of the north will not admit of. Its first appearance among us will be about the age of fourteen, at which time, in close connection with the attaining the age of puberty, the whole character will open out and flow in collateral lines with that of the tendency we are speaking of. Its first sensations will be slight and indefinite, and from ignorance of their nature will often be yielded to with slight resistance. And this at the outset is a point of very considerable difficulty to the spiritual guide; he will usually find the youth he is guiding conscious of certain sensations, without attaching a definite meaning to them, so little so, that it will be very difficult for the Priest so to frame his questions or advice, or so to select his words, as to avoid suggesting, while he desires to hinder sin. He will usually find it has been indulged without any notion of its sinfulness, without strong feeling of desire, and been suggested by the example of others without much of criminal intention.

During the age immediately preceding that of puberty, and the earliest period of the age itself, the youth will himself yield to feelings of this kind without much consciousness, preserving his usual openness and lightness and ease of manner; his

acts will be either done without any fear of notice, or if any is felt it will proceed from the usual reserve of boyhood, without having distinct consciousness of the depth of this sinful temptation.

But this state of feeling will gradually alter as he enters further on this stage of his life; he will realize that he is possessed of feelings and powers in relation to others which he has hitherto been ignorant of; his whole nature will have a depth in it which he has hitherto been unconscious of; he has at once stepped down into deep waters, to which his previous objects and pleasures have been but the shallows of a summer stream; his enjoyments however sensual have till now been gay and open; he feared no observation, and shrunk from no sympathy with them; his highest physical temptations were to appetite or indolence, and for them he did not care the notice of his fellow.

But his physical pleasures have now taken a deeper root; the object he feels impelled to pursue is as much beyond mere appetite and ease as the ocean is deeper than the river which swells it; they increase his desires, but are far from being equal to it in depth. He scarcely knows what he wants; he does not realize the object his new and developed nature is leading him to; he feels a strange veil of shame let gradually down over his pursuits; he begins for the first time to shun the witness of others on account of the desire itself, wholly independent of any fear as to its consequence on himself; he becomes a lover and courtier of solitude,

or the company of but two or three, to whom he whispers, not tells, the impulse of his soul.

He becomes abstracted and often silent, and the result on his outward bearing will be that of abstraction and absence, a slight confusion of manner, an inclination to throw off suspicion in the minds of observers; he becomes with all this more manly, and his character will open out in close connection with his new temptation; he will be aware that the object of his desire is one which is wrong, and violates a warning of conscience. But at first it is indistinct, and he scarcely knows whither his desire is leading him. Of course all these symptoms will considerably vary in proportion as he is of a character reserved or open, under the check and power of religion or not, but more or less they will be discernible in all cases: besides which, it is true that many persons are far less than others under the dominion or guidance of sensual temptations of this kind at all.

The next stage will be one in which the youth will have become more conscious of the cause and object of his new sensations. He will have reduced his general and undefined feelings towards some particular object; and now characters will take very different directions, and will branch off into at least three or four divisions: those which yield to the guidance of sinful inclinations; those which strive to suppress them and yet are distressed by them; and those which are not conscious of any strong temptation of the kind at all.

The first description of youth, having attained the age and condition of mind I have described, will pursue his object; that object will vary much; it may take the form of natural or unnatural objects; it may take each one of them in a more or less deep manner; they may be pursued with a frivolous and shallow lightness, or they may have a deeper and more settled hold and intention on the mind of the subject; all which will depend on his own general character, or the violence of his temptation. He will, in proportion as he follows his object, become more and more bold, reckless and determined. If of an unreserved disposition he will by degrees scarcely shun external observation, except as far as it may hinder the object of pursuit. He will manifest a manner of independence and indifference which will be new to him; and try to throw off the restraint of those rules, which he has hitherto patiently borne. The youth of a more reserved disposition will mark his entrance on this new stage of his moral being, by more of the absence and restraint of manner which was spoken of above; and his inclinations will lead him to the indulgence of solitude, poetic feelings, and musings. It will often take the form of direct affection for some particular object, which he will strive to restrain within the limits of lawful affection, and reasonable hope, and expectation, even though the object towards which he allows his thoughts to incline may be frequently shifted and changed. If he allows these desires to take a more

criminal form, a manifest deterioration of character will immediately ensue; very often in such cases we shall observe a giving up of intellectual pursuits, or care for the respect and society of men of esteem; sometimes it will take the form of a direct and expressed contempt for principles and employments, which have any depth or value in them; ending in a silent scepticism, which is only shewn in the manner, and indirectly.

The external condition of the next class will so much be the result of discipline used by themselves, that their symptoms more properly belong to a future page of these remarks.

The third class consists of youths who are not under any strong temptation at all, who reach the age adverted to, and are scarcely conscious of any sinful desire. This absence of feeling may arise from natural innocence, or from the strong development of some other element of the moral character, which overbears the sensual; and from physical causes. The appearance such will present will be that of great simplicity; saying and doing things which will be calculated to astonish one suffering keenly from the inward anguish of his sins, but merely resulting, in the youth himself, from ignorance or simplicity.

Of course in this condition it is of the utmost importance that no sinful details should be suggested, and no impure feeling defined by the question put. This is difficult, but it is of the first importance; it must be remembered that the least

familiarity with impure desires stains and injures, tends to hardness of heart, and never leaves the subject just where it found him. There are striking peculiarities in the case of this sin, even while the deepest shame will be experienced in adverting to it. To many there is an inward satisfaction in dwelling on recollections of past indulgences, and on the ideas which the most transient question may suggest. There is a strange secret gratification in being looked upon as the subject of those sensations which at the same time he may be suffering from as from a body of living death. There is often a desire to become acquainted with new circumstances and facts connected with it, which will impel the youth ever to draw out his spiritual guide into closer and minuter detail.

It is impossible to say how large the amount of caution is which must be used lest the act which is intended to relieve and assist, be in the end the very minister and occasion of sin.

The way to avoid this result will be to put such questions, if any are asked, as will not in the least degree discover the intention of the guide unless the youth be fully aware of the presence of the particular temptation; but which, if he be suffering under the agony of these sensations, he will recognise quickly the intention of. This object may be achieved by asking in a general way whether he is conscious of having fallen into any sin which weighs on his conscience, or whether he is conscious of any temptation which has peculiarly harassed him

and influenced him; in short, by general questions of this kind, if the case need questions at all. There will be much indicated by manner; there will be a perfect freedom and unsuspecting simplicity about the condition of purity which will at once in some tell its own tale: a confusion, embarassment, and conscious distress of manner on the subject of impure desires in others, which will quickly shew the state of conscience and the nature of the sin.

The details of this temptation will vary very much in different persons and characters, both as to degree, nature, and time of approach. It will sometimes take the shape of unchaste desires towards the other sex, sometimes towards those of his own sex; sometimes it will assail the youth in a continual brooding desire, while he continually indulges in all such acts that may fall short of the final one; sometimes the assault will come, especially in the waking hours of the morning, and return no more through the day; at others, the more excited and heated condition of the body in the evening, will produce these sensations; there are occasions when the desire will simply be produced by the sight of attracting objects, or the external suggestions of word or deed by those around; in other cases, the external object will have far less power to elicit feelings of this description than the reflections of the mind or the pictures of the imagination; solitude will in some cases be the special incitement, and in others the best preventive to these desires. A very frequent period of assault is the time of

praying: often Satan will suggest these evil desires in such rapid succession at prayer, in such varied forms, that the pictures of them will almost live before the imagination, and the temptation will be all but sensible, and the tempter corporeal. It will at such times often happen that the suggestion will appear something separate from the mind of the individual, so as almost to give the idea of a possession. The most deeply-rooted and painful of these classes of temptations, are those which belong to solitude rather than to society, and which affect the imagination rather than are dependant on the external object alone for suggestion.

This last kind of temptation will be different in many respects, and belong to a different class of moral constitution, to those which are suggested more directly by sight of objects; and the mode of treatment will be in some respects different. This kind of evil suggestion may belong to a state of moral being far higher than that which is affected by the presence of the object; though sometimes this condition of mind will be the result of having for a length of time yielded to wicked desires, and in this case will shew a vitiated mind and judicial state, for the separate acts of which, though the individual may not be in each case responsible, still he must be considered so, for the general state into which he has allowed himself to fall.

This case is one far more common than we should *a priori* imagine. This mode of assault is used by Satan frequently to disturb and ruin men of the

highest intellectual powers; men who, from deep refinement of mind, and high pursuits, and, above all, from being devoted to an elevated holy calling, would peculiarly shun any object which might suggest desires alike odious and impure. Images thrust before them, vile pictures painted on the imagination, by a hand independent of the will of the sufferer; disgusting outlines impressed with a pencil over which the heart has scarcely any control, will become in such cases the sign and witness of an ever-present and ever-active temptation to evil; and so horrible are the suggestions, so utterly repugnant to the natural condition of his mind, that he will be alarmed at their rapid and sudden appearance, as one would be who saw a spirit, or was visited by a supernatural appearance; so intense the temptation will be, that it would pass the bounds of credit to those who from without viewed the elevated life and exalted tone of the sufferer. In such cases, indeed, it is forcibly true, "the heart knoweth its own bitterness." It seems as if in such cases Satan was aware how, beyond his usual reach, such persons were guarded by an ever-present Spirit, after no usual manner, conveyed through the grace of Ordination, or through some other extraordinary channel; and knowing this, he feels his efforts must be forcibly made counter to the tide of the usual current of his victim's thoughts; so that he will lower his self-respect, and through these means depress his general moral tone: or, hoping, by gradually accustom-

ing him to images of evil, to blunt the keen edge of conscience, and familiarize the fancy to such objects, so as to make it a more ready agent in future for his dark designs. On the other hand, it may be said that such is permitted by God to His own children, to keep them humble and continually conscious of the vileness of their own nature.

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1. Help and advice must be given for the discipline of the thoughts. It is a part of our moral constitution far too much neglected. The most well-conducted external life may be polluted and sullied by the foulest and most impure hearts. Men seem often to think that giving full rein to the thoughts is in itself no sin. So subtle, so intangible, so seemingly beyond our power are thoughts, that it will require the most decided and vigorous curb to restrain them. It has been found good at certain times of walking alone, or lying awake at night, or solitary work, to take a distinct subject to fix the thoughts on forcibly for a certain period, however short, perhaps two minutes; to keep the attention on such subject without allowing it to draw off; taking fit care not to take too long a time for this meditation, as it is of the first importance that the effort should not fail, and far better to succeed in the shortest attempt than to make a longer one and fail in its performance. The mere effort over the thoughts is a step in moral discipline. Not only will the particular

assault be resisted by the sudden and vigorous application of the attention, but a tone will be gradually forming which will give a man power, as well as a tendency to control himself; and by degrees his thoughts will become more and more within his control.

Let the subject of meditation be such as will really arouse and fix the mind; such as our Blessed Lord's death; or our own dying hour brought vividly before the mind; or the image of the Last Judgment; or the bliss of the redeemed, and the present and future agony of the lost; the effect will be to engage the attention in such degree that the impure assaults will gradually become weakened and pass away,—prayer for God's blessing on the effort will go with this; in the interval the thoughts should be allowed to pursue the usual range of their fancy.

2. It seems a law of our moral nature, that no two passions or strong affections can become together supreme over the soul. There is a constant struggle for superiority in each: and neither seems to rest till one has expelled the other. Jealousy of rivalry is one of the features of strong passions. This fact of our nature is evidently known and recognised in many expressions men use, which imply that one interest will drive out another, and one occupation divert the attention from another. Now all this is most true. When we find a mind strongly agitated by the assault of impure desires, the natural thing will be to raise before him some object of affection sufficiently attractive

to engage and draft off his attention; the passion will fade away, and the desires become weakened, and that by a process independent of the mere engrossment of the attention. There are very many counter-feelings and passions which may be used to overbalance the one we desire to eject.

Lawful affection for some object may be used with effect to draw off the attention from a wrong passionate tendency. We are continually reminded by old writers, that for sins of this kind flight is essential, however much it may have the appearance of cowardice; and no mode of flight seems more effectual than that of directing affections to lawful objects, and through lawful means and channels. The tendency to sin such as I have described, seems ever to be to occupy a vacuum, and where there is an absence of ardent feelings of any sort, we shall find it will soon take up its abode. The offering proper objects of love will fill up that vacuum, engage the affection, and engross the attention.

3. Another remedy will be the full employment of time; idleness proverbially is the great inlet to impure affections. Exertion on proper objects exhausts and offers a safety-valve to the energy of the temperament, and also occupies the attention which otherwise would become engaged on the sinful pictures painted on the mind's eye by the hand of Satan, and this employment of the time should be used systematically and by rule. Temptations of this kind often come over the victim in

sudden and distressing waves, and if he is able by God's help to be borne safely through each particular assault, he has gained a distinct advance to the eternal shore; he has surmounted another wave: whereas had he in the least degree fallen, he would have impaired, weakened, and hindered his general spiritual advance; so that he may feel each half-hour of actual employment is not only for the time keeping out sin, but is directly bearing him on to some peaceable spot of his spiritual life, where for a few hours there is a calm free from the storms of temptation and distress; like those fair and fertile spots, which here and there start up with wonderful and astonishing luxuriance amid the barren glaciers of mountain regions.

4. Bodily mortification is a remedy which has a peculiar tendency to quell the power of these sins. Luxuries and comforts pamper the body and increase all sensual tendencies, attach us to the creature, and to this world; many of these desires proceed from a heated and stimulated frame, and the natural mode of restraining them will be by reducing the energy of the body; such abstinences should be used carefully, consisting more in placing aside needless luxuries and ease than in reducing the actual bodily strength. In many ways they directly tend to subdue this kind of temptation.

They produce a lower condition of body, which directly operates on this kind of sensation.

They create a certain calmness and sadness of frame, which very much accustoms and induces the

mind to dwell on sober thoughts connected with death and time, and tend to lower that high estimation of the creature which is one great incentive to desire. They also keep alive a feeling of the need of mortification, to which all high and brilliant ideas and feelings concerning created beings are opposed.

The following passage from Bishop Jeremy Taylor is striking.

"Corporal mortification, and hard usages of our body, hath by all ages of the Church been accounted a good instrument, and of some profit against the spirit of fornication. A spare diet, and a thin, coarse table, seldom refreshment, frequent fasts, not violent, and interrupted with returns to ordinary feeding, but constantly little, unpleasant, of wholesome but sparing nourishment; for by such cutting off the provisions of victual, we shall weaken the strengths of our enemy. To which if we add lyings upon the ground, painful postures in prayer, reciting our devotions with our arms extended at full length, like Moses praying against Amalek, or our blessed Saviour hanging upon His painful bed of sorrows, the cross, and (if the lust be upon us, and sharply tempting) by inflicting any smart to overthrow the strongest passion by the most violent pain, we shall find great ease for the present, and the resolution and apt sufferance against the future danger. And this was St. Paul's remedy, 'I bring my body under;' he used some rudeness towards it. But it was a great nobleness of chastity which St. Jerome repeats of a son of

the king of Nicomedia, who being tempted upon flowers and a perfumed bed, with soft violence, but yet tied down to the temptation, and solicited with circumstances of Asian luxury by an impure courtezan, lest the easiness of his posture should abuse him, spit out his tongue into her face: to represent, that no virtue hath cost the saints so much as this of chastity."

5. The habit of frequent prayer will be a direct check to this sin; the constant tendency to approach God serves as a check on our passions. Prayer not only brings down grace from God, but serves to lead the mind away from sinful objects, and to fix it on God and purity; the desire after holiness and purity, created by prayer, in itself quenches the strength of unlawful desire.

6. The habit of laying open the mind systematically serves most powerfully as a check on this sin, the fact of being brought to a closer examination on the subject, even without giving expression to the outward temptation, evokes the sensation of shame. The self-deceiving nature of this sin frequently leads its victim to imagine that its force is abated merely because it is for a time lulled, or that it has not the same amount of guilt it really has, from the fact of its having shifted its particular mode of outward appearance. Frequent and candid self-examination will serve to expose and correct this.

7. The utmost caution will be required to avoid making slight temptations of this kind of sin of too

great importance, lest it should dispirit the victim by giving the idea that he is more under the dominion of it than he really is, and should yield the more readily and easily from an impression that he cannot help himself.

With these directions for the treatment of this particular sin in some of its particular details as well as in its general bearing, I will close these remarks for the present on spiritual advice: if such hints, drawn from personal experience, are of any value, the result of observation of other faults and tendencies might be suggested in the same way.

SERMON VII.

INFLUENCE OF OPINION ON THE MINISTER.

THE PROPHETS OF AHAB.

St. John xii. 43.

"They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

Among the many motives which have tended to hinder the devotion of the Ministry, few have been more remarkable than the fear of human opinion. In all times the influence of society and individual minds have tended to depress elevated standards; and until human society has altered its standard and tests, its influence must be depressing and lowering. It is against that very standard that the life and conduct of the ministers of God are to be a continual protest; they are the salt of the earth, the light shining in a dark place, the primary influence. If they lower their standard, what is the world to become? If they by exact living and strict consistency, oft-communion and much retirement, do not hold up to men around the portraitures of heaven and the type of saintliness, what conception is the world ever to have of such realities? They will cease to think them realities; they will begin to hold them as theories which have no representatives in the world of facts.

If such be the condition of society, "when He suddenly cometh to His Temple," what will be the account we shall have to render?

And yet there are few if any motives so influential as the opinion of society; nothing we have more to dread, and which is less easy to detect. There is so much of plausibility; so much of affected sincerity and truth; so much of high-mindedness and integrity about men of the world, that it needs the eye which has received the inward light of the spirit, to detect and pierce the veil which covers the enemy of God. Every principle of evil is surrounded by its own circle of satellites and advocates; they shroud it from our gaze, and defend it from many an assault which reason and conscience would justly aim at it. No evil stands unmasked before our inward eye. It lies far back, entrenched behind its own fortifications. It is reserved for the Judgment for us to see sin as it is. Then "he will set before us the things we have done:" now sin is shrouded in mists, a tangle less and less extricable. No sin is more guarded than human opinion; fear of giving causeless offence, bearing with weak brothers, respect for high principles of morality, and honour, the possession of worldly power and influence; all and many more throw a garb of plausibility around the opinion and influence of the world.

But let us see this as it has worked hitherto, and as it is working among us.

I would first remind you how eager the world

has been to catch in its silken toils the prophet, the witness, and the holy teacher of its own day. This has ever been its object and aim, and against this influence it has ever been the aim of the minister of God to protest and fortify himself.

There are some few striking and awful examples of the effect of the world's influence over minds which, nevertheless, had a clear perception of divine truth, and the way of righteousness. The case of Balaam is of course among the foremost. With a clear knowledge of God's will, with a keen conscience, called to a high office, endued with spiritual gifts; the offers of Satan came supported and impregnated with the influence and wealth of the world and its dazzling desires, and he yielded. The deputation of princes shook the firmness of the prophet, and "the princes more and more honourable," shivered to the dust the shaken fabric of his good purpose; "gold and silver" added their weight to the scale, and before the combined influence of rank and money the prophet Balaam became a reprobate and an apostate. Here was an instance of an effort made by the world, and its success. The mention of the rank of the princes, and their more and more honourable character, is full of import and meaning, and forcibly reminds us of the mode in which the world does its work.

Again, may we not read something of the same indication in the account of Moses? May we not imagine that he found an influence at the court of Egypt, which undid the high work to which he was

called? Is there not an indication of such effect of the world and its atmosphere in those few words in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "when he came to years he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter?" and he had dwelt forty years in the atmosphere of that court from which he now found it needful to free himself to be about a greater and holier vocation.

Nicodemus "came to Jesus by night," influenced by the opinions of men of power and authority.

The prophets of the court differed from the prophets of the Lord, when Ahab would consult them about going to Ramoth Gilead to battle. The prophets who were connected with Ahab and the court of Israel, all took one line, the line of advising the king according to his pleasure, while Micaiah would tell nothing but what belonged to the teaching of the Lord.

The mode of their address is striking. "Zedekiah said, Thus saith the Lord, with these shalt thou push the Syrians until thou have consumed them; and all the prophets prophesied so." And the messengers who are gone to call Micaiah spake to him, saying; "Behold now the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth; let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak."

Again, we see the influence of human opinion affecting St. Peter in his judgment on the great

Judaic question in the early Church, on which occasion St. Paul thought it right to withstand him to the face, and to rebuke him.

There are many other cases in Holy Scripture where the influence of the world was of such force as to draw men away from God and holiness, to deteriorate high character, to allay purity of purpose, and to dilute vigour of prayer, and elevation of opinion and doctrine.

But Holy Scripture is not the only record of such influence; the opinion of the world, the power of "princes honourable" has held its sway in every age of the history of the church. The imperial court of Constantinople and the opinion of the emperors of the East, while they themselves were pledged to heresy, held an influence felt like the soft wound of a poisoned arrow, and the highest souls and the most fervent tempers were moderated, blunted, and ruined by the weight of a counter opinion arrayed in the garb of worldly power and influence. High and holy men were bound with silken cords without knowing they were captives, and not till the silk became a band of iron round them did they discover they had lost their freedom, and compromised their independence and truth. The influence of opinion has tended to lead men to the violation of sacred truth, and to the renouncing those statements, one tittle of which in prayer and solitude they would not have yielded with their life.

Such is the fact as to the weight of the world's

opinion. Now let us see the mode in which it operates on us, and the reasons why it does so.

1. One mode of its operation is in its tendency to make a great show of fairness, and calmness, and good sense. The fact is, when any large body of persons from generation to generation coincide in a view on any subject, and that body is made up of men of every possible shade of opinion, circumstance, and estate, it is in the highest degree probable, that the opinions they teach will bear the test of the application of principles of good sense and kindred standards: common usage will enable men to see round principles and opinions, and give them a full opportunity of striking off what appears merely adventitious and inapplicable, all excess and exuberant growth; and the general consent to good in the mass of mankind, will have tended to prevent any decision in favour of what is actually wrong. All this will give an appearance of good sense and intelligence to the opinions of society in the mass, and an *a priori* probability in their favour, while it will give the same presumption against individual opinion, or the opinions of bodies which have not passed through the same ordeal.

We shall see this best by illustration, and that from circumstances of the day, which might become practical to many of us. There is a large tendency among men to latitudinarianism; the tide has set in against dogmatic teaching, and the preservation to the letter of our code of truth violates the taste

and intellectual tone of the day. Even Holy Scripture suffers by the sweeping anathema; and when men dare not place aside its unalterable letter, they compel it to pass through a process of rationalizing interpretation, which results in the same thing: by rational interpretation its ground is made shifting, and if men cannot move the wall itself, they will endeavour to make the foundation on which it rests a shifting quicksand. Still more boldly men attack the dogmatic teaching and traditions of the Church; they expose its apparent weakness to an enlightened and enlightening age; they account for its existence and reality in the world's infancy as the darkness of mediævalism. By this means a large force of seeming goodness and reasonable opinion is arrayed against truth, and the faith of the Church suffers; but the world's standard is false, we may not test Scripture by what seems reasonable or suitable, otherwise we must give up all fixed truth, and flit away into the shoreless sea of scepticism. Dogmatic teaching is the portraiture of Christian facts. The facts remain for ever the same; they cannot shift with our view, of whether they are suitable to our condition or not.

Dogmatic teaching as much claims to be the knowledge of facts in the unseen world, as the volume of the traveller reveals the facts of an almost unvisited territory; consequently, the standard of probability by which the world proves its good sense is a false one, and we must combat it. The minister of God stands within the veil, and he sees more closely

the things of the eternal. He cannot yield to the popular view because he knows it is false. Religious truth is no case of probability. The latitudinarian tendency might assail some higher truth, and declare that our Lord's divinity simply is a mode of statement, having no fact accruing to it, such spirit would on the same ground deny the existence of our Lord at all; the same spirit which sweeps away dogmatic teaching would lead men to definite scepticism. Such is one mode of the application of human opinion. The good sense of the world is not always the highest principle by which we are to be governed.

To take another case of the same kind of influence. Certain practices have fallen into disuse, daily prayer, weekly Communion, and the like, and a man feels that there is a high claim upon him to adopt these practices again; he sees their truth and meaning, and that in a true state of things they would be universal. But though their adoption is quite in his power, he feels there is a weight in public opinion around him against it. There is a tendency in public opinion to support custom; and acts, however high, if fallen into desuetude, have not the appearance of truth and importance in the mind of the world. The same appearance of good sense supports the opinion as before, and many a man is held under by it; he fears to move, he fears singularity, he fears to be original, and strike out a bold line; he fears to burst through the strong and heavy barrier, staggered by an appa-

rently sensible objection; he forgets that there is a higher standard that he of all men is bound to act up to, and by which he will himself be judged. And though by one bold act he might have elevated a higher principle in the sphere in which he moves; and he might have become a leader, not a follower; he is so shackled and tied down by this false respect, that he lives and dies without acting.

2. Another mode in which the opinions of the world operate is through contempt and ridicule; men are often restrained as much by this as they are by an impression of the real weight of opinion. The world is very confident and determined in the expression of opinion, it is made up of various bodies of men, and some have already lost the perceptions of conscience, and are consequently firm and clear in their line; while others of them see the need of boldly assuming what they have found it really difficult to feel, but are bent on following. And nothing so gives force to ridicule and contempt as vigorous determination on the part of the despiser. Many a man dreads the charge of lack of manliness, or good sense, and he quails beneath the charge and imputation when it comes in the shape of attack from a body which is determined and presents a united front. A man feels solitary when he is compelled to act against this weight of expression, and he dreads the imputation of false motives. Many a custom, high and holy, which he loves and values, and which if once adopted would

shew its own force and truth, he fears to begin from this false shame, and yet if he did, the whole weight of opposition would soon pass away, and the very men who have opposed him would yield to the truth of his view. How fearful, if at the last men be found to have imitated the world in its opinions and low standards, through dread of asserting what they know is truth! to us is committed the very work of protest against the world; we are the light of the world, and if we dim it who shall answer for it? In many vocations and positions of life men have to make bold and individual efforts and hazards for truth's sake, and in doing so, to bear obloquy and scorn; why should not we, whose sphere is so high, and when the need is so great!

3. Again, the world's opinion influences in creating the desire to win others, although this supposed notion is most treacherous and full of the peril of self-deceit. It has ever been a snare in the Church. The Neo-Platonic schools bear witness to the fact, and forms more or less subtle of eclecticism have shewn from time to time how strongly the desire to win the good, and the honest, and the intelligent, has filled the minds of the best men. We have in us a respect for the opinion and regard of the good; the feeling is right, but it has been among the greatest snares of the good; a false charity has destroyed the sternness of dogmatism, and the very letter of creeds has run the risk of being sacrificed.

The truth is, that there is a lurking deceit under this apparent desire to win; it rests more in the desire to be won than to win, more in the wish to gain and keep the world's good opinion than to gain their adherence to ours. We ought not to wish to win the world by compromise, we ought not to care for it if it is to involve the slightest degree of a false eclecticism: we must beware of admitting for one moment the feeling that to gain the highest and noblest of earth we may give up one tittle of actual truth; and yet we see men all around us held back from acting highly, and asserting truth, from no other reason than that some one whose talents, integrity, or position, will adorn religion, cannot be won without such yielding. No one however elevated confers glory on the Church of God; it sheds all its glory on them: and it is a dishonour on God to imagine that we can add to His glory by the homage of the great or noble of this world. Their highest glory is a trifle, a fitful ray after all, and a worm can as well hope to confer glory on a diadem as the highest of mortals to add to the glory of God and truth.

The influence the world gains is from more causes than one. There is a fallacy involved in the admiration of the great, and noble, and free; these qualities are not of necessity high and holy; they partake of the world's glory rather than that of the Church; they are the stolen glory which Satan offered to give back to our Lord. Saul is a more striking character in this respect than Daniel; the

world would admire him more, but the Christian could not; we form false estimates, and forget that it is not only in actual sin and frivolity we must expect disagreement and ridicule from the world, but also in our estimate of human character and greatness; our greatness is not its greatness; and the standard to which we must bring such things must be rather that of our regenerate than our original nature; the test and standard of the world differ materially from those of the Church and the judgment-day.

In the latter, obedience, humility, meekness, and subjection of individuality will prevail. We forget this, and the minister of God is often caught in the snare. It is not in proportion as we succumb to the rules of the great of earth, that we shall stand high in the ordeal of the judgment, but simply as we have been obedient to the laws of the new and spiritual kingdom, of which we are members by baptism and grace. Too often we are false to our allegiance; and desert the cause we are pledged to.

Many of the world's feelings and principles counterfeit goodness and greatness, and it is our duty to resist and expose it. We are to be tried by the laws of our second nature, and the code of that nature is distinct from the code of our original one; generosity, courage, liberality, high-mindedness, are not the only virtues under the new dispensation; such feelings and acts must with us be robed in the garb of discipline and self-subjugation; God not self

must be their object; an internal not an external approval must be their aim.

Another reason for the influence the world gains over us is, that we so live in it; we forget there are two societies on earth, the spiritual and the secular; the ministers, laws, aims, arrangements of each must be distinct; if one enters the other it must be by submission, as admitted citizens with a bought freedom; we are not freeborn in either, we each must enter the other as pilgrims and strangers; we are sojourners. If the world enter our life, they must be either as strangers, or they must leave their own position, and be one of us; if we enter the world we must be separate; we are ambassadors at a foreign court, and must never forget the fact of our being aliens. Nay, we must be on the look out for the honour of the Master we serve, jealous to punctilio for His glory, and ready to leave at a moment's warning when that honour is impugned. But we do not do this, we live too much by the world's laws, opinions, and factions; the consequence is, we give them advantage over us; we lose self-respect; we do not realize that we have a position of our own; we are conscious of none, and this re-acts sadly on self; when if we lived by a different rule, and were guided according to the laws of the heavenly kingdom, we should receive strength and energy from the mere conviction of independence.

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